Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/hometruthsformar0000mada

HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN

WORKS BY MADAME CECILIA

HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN - - 5/-
MORE HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN - 5/-
MORE SHORT SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN - - - - - - - 5/-
AT THE FEET OF JESUS - - - - - 3/6
THE RETREAT MANUAL - - - - - 3/-
LABOURERS IN GOD'S VINEYARD - -1/6 and 2/6
HINTS FOR CATECHISTS ON INSTRUCTING CONVERTS - - - - - - - 3/6
SCHOOL AND HOME PLAYS FOR GIRLS. A Series—
1. MAY BROOKE. A Drama - - - 1/-
2. CLARA'S TRICK. Serio-comic Drama - 1/-
3. MISS JEMIMA'S PETS. Serio-comic Drama 1/-
4. ANCILLA'S DEBT. A Drama - - - 1/-
5. FERNLEIGH GRANGE. A Drama - - 1/-
6. A CHILD'S INFLUENCE. A Drama - - 1/-
7. AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT. A Comedy 1/-
COR CORDIUM. Thoughts on the Sacred Heart - 2/-
MATER MEA. Thoughts for Mary's Children - - 2/-
CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE MANUALS—
ST. MATTHEW - - - - - 5/-
ST. MARK - - - - - - - 5/-
ST. JOHN - - - - - - - 10/-
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - - - - 8 6

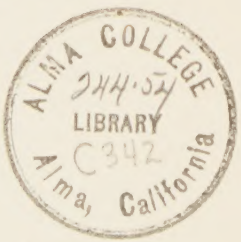
HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN

BY

MADAME CECILIA

RELIGIOUS OF ST. ANDREW'S CONVENT, STREATHAM

FIFTH EDITION



LONDON

BURNS OATES AND WASHBOURNE LTD.

1927

46402

Nihil obstat:

CHARLES POYER,

Censor deputatus.

Imprimatur:

✠ HERBERTUS CARDINALIS VAUGHAN,

Archiep. Westmonast.

14 *Sept.*, 1899.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

Dedication.

TO ALL OUR DEAR LADY'S CHILDREN,
AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE CHILDREN OF MARY
AMONG WHOM IT HAS BEEN THE
WRITER'S JOY AND PRIVILEGE TO LABOUR FOR MANY YEARS,
THESE SIMPLE HOME TRUTHS
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

COVENTRY HALL, STREATHAM,
February 28th, 1899.

Table of Contents.

PART I.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S SOCIAL LIFE.

CONFERENCES.

	PAGE
On Consecration to Mary	1
On the Sodality Medal	9
Spiritual Advantages of the Sodality of Our Lady	17
The Child of Mary at Home (1)	24
The Child of Mary at Home (2)	33
The Child of Mary in the Sick-room	42
On the Choice of a Friend	51
On Conversation	61
On Charity in Thought	72
On Charity in Word	79
On Charity in Deed	84
On Work	93
On Vocation (1)	103
On Vocation (2)	108
On the Shelf	117
Choosing a Partner	125

PART II.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S INNER LIFE.

CONFERENCES.

	PAGE
On Time	137
On Reading	146
On the Besetting Sin	157
On the use of the Imagination	167
On Temptation	177
On the Advantages of Temptation	187
After the Battle	196
On Confession	204
Emmanuel	215
On Vigilance	223
On Prayer	230
On a Rule of Life	237
A Mother's Portrait (Part I.)	246
A Mother's Portrait (Part II.)	254

PART I.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S SOCIAL LIFE.

ON CONSECRATION TO MARY.

"HOLY MARY, I choose thee this day for my Queen, my Advocate, and my most tender Mother." Are these words familiar to you? Do they recall an altar of Mary and a young girl in a white veil consecrating herself to the Mother of God for time and for eternity, and receiving in return the long-coveted title, "Child of Mary"? Were not you that child? Do you remember your feelings of devotion to our dear Lady in that solemn moment? You had desired this grace so long, and if you made your consecration to Mary in a convent chapel as a schoolgirl, you had undergone a long probation and were perhaps rejected more than once because, as you would have said, you were "not good enough." At last, however, your efforts were rewarded, and, as a reward for sustained effort in well-doing, the privilege was accorded. In the joy of your heart, and with a sincere desire to do well, you entered Mary's service, and begged her to be your Mother. You were consecrated as a Child of Mary. All Christians are children of Mary, all are dear to her; but the Child of Mary has promised to honour Mary more especially, and has taken on herself special duties and practices of piety. The Church consecrates buildings to God's service, and when a building has been dedicated to God it is a

sacrilege to profane it, Our soul is a temple, consecrated to God at our baptism. On that day the Lord, Whom as yet we were unable to seek, "came to His Temple." He took possession of our soul, He made us His well-beloved children, pleasing to Him because we were pure. Then came the day of our first Communion. Do you remember the day, when you gave yourself, body and soul, to Jesus, to be His alone: and, child as you were, you meant what you said, when, with your hand on the Holy Gospels, you pronounced those words, "I renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and I give myself to Jesus Christ for ever"? That you might keep this promise more effectually, you consecrated yourself later on in an especial manner to Mary, and now you are a Child of Mary. Was this consecration a mere form? Not if it was made with all the intensity of your will. Notice the promise made by a child of Mary at the altar "I make a firm and inviolable resolution never to say anything contrary to thy service, or to permit those who depend on me to transgress in any way the honour which is due to thee." It is a twofold promise to honour Mary ourselves and to prevent others from dishonouring her. How are we to fulfil this promise.? We fulfil it when we give Mary our time, when we attend our Sodality meetings faithfully, when we recite the prayers appointed by our rules. Mary expects a daily homage from her children. It does not do to be pious by jerks, now doing much, now neglecting all. A Jesuit novice once asked St. Stanislaus what devotions were most pleasing to Mary. The

Saint replied, "Little and well." Do something daily in Mary's honour, but aim at quality rather than quantity; one golden "Hail Mary" daily, that is one prayer said with all the earnestness of your soul, is worth a rosary of distracted prayers. As the year speeds on its course Mary's feasts come round. We should keep these days well, hear Mass, and go to Communion if possible. At least try to get to Benediction in the evening. This will involve a sacrifice, but so much the better. Like David, we should say, "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God, holocausts free-cost." If you have to toil for your daily bread, perhaps it means the sacrifice of an hour's sleep or of a comfortable meal. Yet you sacrifice these for pleasure so often; surely, they can be sacrificed for God sometimes.

Now as regards the second part of our promise, as far as it is in our power we must prevent anything contrary to Mary's honour. This is merely the natural consequence of our love for Mary. Will a loving child hear her mother caluminated without defending her? In the life of Mother Margaret Hallahan an incident is related which does credit to her zeal for our Lady's honour. Margaret was a servant when it happened. A tradesman one day called with some goods, and was waiting in the kitchen for further orders when he noticed some religious prints on the wall. From these he concluded that the servant was a papist, and immediately began to insult our Blessed Lady. Margaret changed colour, her eyes flashed, the words were choked by her indignation,

but her hands were free, and she relieved her feelings by aiming a plate at his head. It was "a weighty argument," and I do not recommend you to repeat the experiment, since the man must have gone away more convinced of the hardness of a plate than of the truth of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. But the spirit which animated the deed is worthy of admiration. Never sit quietly listening to calumnies against your faith. Never let people think that you are not a Catholic, unless Christian prudence demands it. A servant, who had been in service in the same house for ten years, was once asked if she had any difficulty in practising her religion in her situation. "Not the least," she replied, "my mistress does not know that I am a Catholic." What a revelation of cowardice and negligence on the part of that servant! Those words speak volumes. They tell us of Sunday Mass neglected, of the law of abstinence infringed, of the Sacraments unfrequented, of the concealment of a crucifix or medal or of any pious object which might betray her Catholic faith, of jeers against the Church unrefuted, and perhaps laughed at from sheer cowardice. In a word, they reveal a disciple ashamed of Christ. Still all was not lost, there were still a few sparks of love smouldering in her heart, she had at least said her prayers daily and had sometimes taken a tram to go to Benediction in the neighbouring parish, where she was not likely to meet any friends. She listened to a warning voice, and with the help of God's grace began a better life. To expiate her

past cowardice she determined to try to bring others into the Church and became a fervent Child of Mary, characterised by her zeal for religion and God blessed her efforts True love, like fire, cannot remain long concealed. It must betray itself by works of zeal. Consecration to Mary implies being an apostle, trying to bring others into the Sodality. Have you ever brought or tried to bring any one to the Sodality? Perhaps you will answer, "I have thought of asking such or such a person, but I cannot screw up my courage; she might laugh at me and refuse to come." What terrible alternatives! "She might laugh at you." Well, suppose she does, cannot you bear this for the love of God? It is astonishing what cowards we are in presence of a laugh. To vary a well-known quotation, we might say a mocking laugh "doth make cowards of us all." We may well take a lesson from the members of the Salvation Army. See how they tramp through the mud, how they are jeered and laughed at by the mob. Shall we, the true Salvation Army, have less courage? Were you asked to go out publicly into the streets, "to compel them to come in," you might shrink from the ordeal. "She might refuse" is your second objection. That will not affect your merit: God measures our actions by their intentions; He wills the good deed, but He does not always will the success. The attempt to do good is sure to give you an extra merit, and, if God adds a little act of mortification, the profit is all for you.

The true apostle, however, like Jesus, must

begin "to do and to teach"; if our exterior work is to be fruitful we must labour in our own soul. It is easier to correct ourselves than others, and deeds persuade where words fail to convince. There is much to be done in our own soul, faults to correct, good habits to cultivate. Aim at correcting those defects which make you unlike Mary, and if there are several which give you pain and trouble, choose first the one, which most disedifies your neighbour. For example, you notice that you sometimes neglect your prayers, and also that you frequently get impatient with your sisters: aim at correcting your impatience first since it affects others.

Our consecration to Mary teaches us to respect ourselves; respect for our faith, for our purity, and for our reputation. Faith is a priceless treasure. Do not expose it by reading books against faith. It is fashionable now for young ladies of a sentimental bias to develop Agnostic tendencies. It is so interesting to go to a priest with doubts against faith. They have read this or that (when, perhaps, they know little beyond the titles of the works in question), and they cannot believe in the existence of God, of hell, etc. If, however, while they are explaining their would-be doubts a sudden danger arose, the prayer, "O God, help me," would instantly rise to their lips, and their affected unbelief would vanish. Holy Scripture says, "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God'"; but Holy Scripture nowhere says that he is fool enough to believe it. Be careful what books you read: our public libraries are full of books unfit

for a young girl to read. You would not taste poison under pretence of knowing what it is like. Since you are a child consecrated to the "Virgin of Virgins" watch over your purity. The eyes and ears must be guarded; you must refuse to listen to those secrets of which some girls are so fond. Have the moral courage to say that a conversation displeases you, or at least to go away. Curiosity must be curbed, and the heart must not be thrown to the first bidder.

Our reputation must also be respected. Any action which might have even an appearance of scandal must be avoided. The world is harsh and unfair in its judgments. Any fault committed by a Sodalist is looked upon as a kind of original sin, inherent in a Child of Mary. The person's individuality is lost to view, and the world sneeringly says, "That is how Children of Mary behave." We need to be doubly careful for the sake of our companions. One good rule of conduct is to ask ourselves what Our Lady would have done had she been in our place. The answer will furnish us with a rule of conduct. How hard all this seems, does it not? Yes, it is hard, and would be harder still if there were no brighter side of the question. Our consecration has given us a mother's love and a mother's care. When Jesus hung upon the Cross He gave you to Mary; He forsaw that you would be her faithful child, and your love and devotion to His Mother gave a joy to Jesus. Mary protects her children, she watches over them. Only when "time shall be no longer," and we are standing with the white-

robed throng, shall we know how many graces Mary has procured us.

Here below let us honour Mary. Go to her, Child of Mary, in all your troubles. Mary in her humility never worked miracles when on earth; but who can count the miracles she works for her children who are now on earth? Devotion to Mary is a sure sign of predestination, for "the true servant of Mary shall never perish." If you have fallen, if you have profaned the temple sanctified in your baptism, still fear not to have recourse to Mary. She will obtain for you the graces of conversion and perseverance. What a joy will be ours when, after life's pilgrimage is over, we shall raise our eyes and meet those of our Heavenly Mother; gazing on us with something of the love with which she regarded her Divine Infant; for then we shall be pure, and Mary will see the image of Jesus in each of her redeemed children. Her joy will be to present us to Jesus, and from her love of us we may learn "to love all for Jesus and to love Jesus for Himself."

ON THE SODALITY MEDAL.

"RECEIVE, my child, this ribbon and medal as the livery of the Immaculate Mary, and the mark of your consecration to this tender Mother. Remember, while wearing it, to prove yourself her worthy child by the innocence and holiness of your conduct." These words were addressed to each of you individually the day you made your consecration to Mary, and a few moments given to meditating on their meaning will not be spent in vain. They teach us that our medal is the livery of Mary, given us for a special purpose, namely, that it may be a *reminder* and an *incentive* to innocence and holiness.

What is the meaning of the word "livery?" The history of our country furnishes us with an answer. Under Saxon rule the feudal system, as it was called, existed in germ, and was further developed by the Norman kings. The feudal system had for base the tenure of land on condition of military service. The king was looked upon as the supreme landowner. He made grants of fiefs or pieces of land to his subjects on condition that they should follow him in battle, espouse his cause, and maintain his honour. These tenants-in-chief, by a process called sub-infeudation, shared their fiefs among their vassals, on the same pro-

mises being made to them. A special ceremony was performed when land was granted to an inferior. The vassal, bare-headed and unarmed, knelt before his liege lord, took the oath of fealty, after which he was invested with his fief. There were mutual obligations between the lord and his vassal, for if the latter was bound to follow his lord in battle, he, for his part, was bound to protect his liege man. As a mark of their obligation the vassals wore the badge or livery of their master. We can see clearly a parallel between this ancient custom and our consecration to Mary. We kneel at her altar, we promise to maintain her honour; then we are invested with the livery of Mary, that is our ribbon and our medal, and the priest tells us we are now Children of Mary in an especial manner. As vassals of Mary, we must be zealous for her honour, devout in her service, and then we may count on her protection "now and at the hour of our death."

But our medal is more than a livery, it is a reminder that we must strive to attain innocence and holiness. Are these virtues synonymous? Not exactly. We speak of those infants whose lives were sacrificed for Christ at Bethlehem as the "Holy Innocents," whereas we speak, not of the innocence, but of the holiness of the Saints. Innocence is the negative side, so to speak, of holiness. "Cease to do perversely, learn to do well," is the advice given us in Holy Writ. What are we to understand by innocence? Innocence is the absence of anything that would stain our soul, absence, above all, of mortal sin, which robs us com-

pletely of our purity of soul ; absence also of venial sin which mars purity.

It is in our power to avoid deliberate sin, and our lives will be holy and pleasing to God if we never commit any other sins than those of frailty. Do you understand the difference between these two kinds of sin ? Let us take an example. Some one has offended you early in the morning ; you are alone working, and as your hands ply the needle, your brain is also active. You are thinking over the offence, making a meditation on it with a steady application worthy of a better subject, for you are making one of those rare things, a meditation without a distraction. Yes, you have been injured, you supply motives, you work yourself up into a temper and determine to give the offender a warm reception when you meet again. Your weapons are all prepared ; you only await the occasion to use them. At dinner you meet the foe, your arrows are discharged in a volley such as a woman's tongue alone can send off. This is a fully deliberate fault, since you had the firm intention of committing it. Now, suppose that, instead of deliberately meditating on the injury received, you had tried to put the unkind thoughts out of your mind, and that each time they returned you tried to drive them away. You leave your work at dinner-time with a firm purpose to forgive and forget. But the person who offended you is still disagreeable, and when you meet she says something still more annoying. Then your anger breaks out ; you fail in your good resolution in spite of your good intentions. This is a fault

of frailty. Now do you grasp clearly the difference between these two sins? Fully deliberate sins we can avoid with the help of God's grace; whereas we shall be subject to sins of frailty all our lives.

Striving after holiness is the positive side of our warfare. Just as we all experience some particular bodily ailment or weakness, so we have our spiritual ailments. These are the evils we have to overcome. For one it is pride, for another laziness, for another bad temper. Some people's faults are clearly seen, and these are more easily conquered than those hidden faults which conceal themselves and sometimes even pass off as virtues. The essential point is to know our weak side and to strive manfully to conquer it. We are so clear-sighted in perceiving the defects of others, yet frequently we commit the very faults that we condemn in them. Thus two hot-tempered people living together will each complain of the other's temper. Do you know your besetting sin? If so, are you taking definite practical means to conquer it? For we cannot "grow out" of it without an effort. The form may modify, but the *root* remains unchanged. Thus, suppose that as a child you were greedy, and were frequently found with your chubby little hands in the jam-pot: suppose, further, that you were never corrected and never tried to correct yourself. Now that you are in your teens you will not steal jam, but you will spend all your pocket-money on yourself, you will grumble if the dinner is not to your liking, you will want luxuries which your parents can ill

afford. You have chosen another kind of jam, but the old fault is still there. If, on the other hand, you are striving seriously to correct yourself of your besetting sin, then you are making rapid strides on the road to holiness.

Now examine your medal carefully and see what you can learn from it. On one side there is an image of our Blessed Lady, with the inscription, "Show thyself a mother." On the other side we see two branches of lilies ; a star surrounded by rays of light is placed above them, and below there is a place for your name. What do these emblems teach us ? First, consider the image of Mary. When God creates an immortal soul He imprints His image on it to show that the soul belongs to Him, and He wills that each Christian should be a living image of Christ, "the firstborn of every creature." Mary was the most perfect image of Jesus that ever has or ever will exist ; and we, as Children of Mary, purpose in wearing our dear Mother's medal to imitate her as far as we can, that we may the more perfectly imitate Jesus.

The inscription is a prayer. Why not make a contract with Mary that the mere fact of wearing our medal is a sign of our constant desire to invoke her protection ?

The lilies remind us of the innocence of which we have spoken, for a lily is typical of purity. By them we are reminded of purity of intention, of doing all for God, as Mary ever did, and to do God's will even when it crucifies us. Purity of intention is easy to practise when we have to perform an unpleasant duty ; but when our duties are con-

genial then it is difficult to do them purely for God. For example, we have to do some work, which we like: we are naturally active; self slips in and leads us to work for praise, to try to excel others, etc. Make your act of offering each morning with all the fervour possible, and, like a golden vein, it will run through all your actions and render them precious in God's sight. Above the lilies shines a star, emblem of Mary, whom we invoke as "Star of the Sea," who will guide our frail bark across life's stormy ocean. Typical also of the good example that a Child of Mary should give to those around. Jesus is Himself the "Light of the World"; and we, His disciples, must let our "light shine before men, that they may glorify" not us—notice here purity of intention again comes in—but our Father in Heaven. Our light shines when in all simplicity we strive to accomplish our daily duty for God's sake. Just as the greatest intensity of illumination is nearest the focus, so our light should first of all lighten those near and dear to us. How many people keep their virtues, like an overcoat, only for outdoor wear. They are all smiles out of doors, always ready to help strangers or friends; and then they balance the account by frowning at home; by refusing or giving their services grudgingly, forgetting that "God loveth a willing giver." Let your home be the focus whence your light radiates, and let your *parents and relations first benefit* by the light and heat. If, when looking at our medal, we are reminded of this, the star, with its rays, has not been placed there in vain. Lastly your name is engraved on your medal, that name which was written in the Book of Life when you were

baptised ; and may we not say that Mary bears the name of all her children in her heart ? In ancient Rome children of noble families were wont to wear the image of their parents on their breast ; but, if they did anything unworthy of their name, they were deprived of the image. Let us strive to be worthy Children of Mary as far as lies in our power.

Learn from this simple instruction to value your medal : always wear it ; by so doing you can gain an indulgence. You may also do good merely by wearing it, as the following story proves.

A Child of Mary was once going on a long railway journey, and had to pass the night in the train. She was simply dressed and wore her medal attached to a little silver brooch. Two ladies entered the carriage. They took their places ; one sat opposite, and the other, an old lady, sat next to her. The train started, the old lady soon fell asleep ; so did the young girl. The other traveller tried to read at first, but the light was too dim ; presently she laid down her book and gazed absently before her. Her eyes fell on the silver medal which glistened as it caught the light. She knew the meaning of that medal, for she too had once possessed one ; but, alas, since the day of her consecration she had turned her back on God and plunged into all the follies of the world. Now, in the silence of the night she thought of the days when she was pure in God's sight ; she remembered how her first step on the downward path had been to lay aside her medal, because she had been laughed at for wearing it. God's grace did its work in her soul : she who had neglected prayer for years

prayed now with all her heart for strength to be brave and to return to the practice of her religion. The train reached its destination, our two travellers awoke, and all three went their way. As they were leaving the carriage the Child of Mary was astonished by the middle-aged lady grasping her by the hand, and saying in a trembling voice, "God bless you"; but she never knew that her medal had been the instrument in God's hands of arousing a sleeping conscience and bringing a soul back to God. How many like incidents the last day will reveal! Cherish, then, your medal; love the image of your Heavenly Mother, and she will help you to attain that holiness to which God calls every one of us, and without which no man can see God.

SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES OF THE SODALITY OF OUR LADY.

In the previous instruction, when speaking of the Sodality medal, we dwelt chiefly on the duties of a Child of Mary to herself and her neighbour, and passed in review some of the obligations which the rule impose. But there is another side of the question. What benefits do we derive from the Sodality? What should the Sodality be for each Child of Mary? A little thought will enable you to see that it is for each one a *guide* to virtue, a *rein* to keep us in the right path, a *refuge* in danger, a *source of grace*, an *honour*, and a *pledge of perseverance*. Let us work out these few thoughts together.

The Sodality should be for you a *guide* to virtue. When a traveller sets out on a perilous journey he needs a guide. He is not so foolish as to venture alone, because he fears his inexperience and weakness. You are travelling on a life-long journey; perhaps, as yet, "Time, the subtle thief of youth," has not yet "stolen on his wing" the second decade of your life. You do not realise the dangers that surround you, your own inexperience, or your need of a guide. Nay, often would you fain thrust aside a friendly hand,

fretting against it as the enemy of liberty. However, you were wise enough to join the Sodality, which is the guide you need. It gives a prudent rule of life; it traces out your route, and if you are faithful to your rules you will not swerve from the path of virtue. Do you know your rules? Do you ever read them, and examine yourself as to how you keep them? Do you esteem them and try to act up to them? Give our dear Lady the answer to these questions when next you kneel at her feet. When the Manual of the Sodality was placed in your hand by the priest, he addressed you thus: "Receive this book, which contains the rules and pious practices of the Association, and be ever faithful in observing them." These rules are approved by the Church, and have helped to make many a Saint. St. Francis of Sales, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and many other canonised Saints, were Children of Mary. Pius IX., in a Brief, wrote thus: "We desire nothing more ardently than to see the faithful, and particularly the young, enrolling themselves in these Congregations."

The Sodality is a *rein* to keep you in the right path. If you were not a Child of Mary, who would take the trouble to warn you of a danger that threatens your spiritual welfare? These dangers may come from without or from within. Perhaps you are getting too fond of dress. Now when a girl falls into this fault of dressing above her means and station there are plenty who will ridicule her folly and criticise her conduct, but few care to brave her displeasure by

warning her of the danger. A zealous President will probably have the charity to tell the offender a disagreeable truth, and after the first ebullition of anger, inherent to wounded vanity when reproved, is past, a true Child of Mary will have sense enough to be grateful to a real friend and profit by the remark. How often just the contrary happens! Vanity gets the upper hand, and a Child of Mary, in her indignation, vows vengeance on all the Sodality, and particularly on the charitable President. "Why am I interfered with? If the President were asked to pay for my clothes it would be different. Other girls wear more fashionable things than I do. You will not see me at any more meetings," etc. Thus she continues listening to all the subterfuges of mortified vanity which thrives on such arguments, while poor humility is reduced to a skeleton. Perhaps our Sodalist goes so far as to buy a hat the trimming of which is even more extravagant than the one which provoked the unwelcome criticism, and she wears it bravely at the next meeting as an energetic protestation of her attachment to Woman's Rights. Yes, doubtless it is true that every woman has a certain right to do foolish things occasionally; in this matter precedents are not lacking, beginning with Eve. Perchance our Sodalist chooses another way of showing her anger. She gives up attending the meeting and when tired of nursing her wrath, regrets her desertion. Now the devil keeps her away by whispering that it would be unworthy of her to retrace her steps, and in this way many a Child of Mary has left the

Association. What utter folly! If you had entered a train that was going to Scotland, believing that you were in the train for Cornwall, whither you desired to go, would you be ashamed to get out at the first station, and own that you had made a mistake? Only a madman would continue the journey. Yet, how often, when it is a question of our spiritual interests, are we guilty of such folly.

How noble a deed it is to own frankly that we have been in the wrong! The poet Dryden, after his conversion to Catholicity, gives us a touching example of this frankness. He had written many "heroic plays" which were decidedly coarse. In so doing he followed the fashion of his day, which was encouraged by the dissolute Court of Charles II. Jeremy Collier, an Anglican clergyman, came forward as the champion of morality and decency on the stage, quoting from authors who had offended against these virtues, and Dryden's name was included in the list. While the greater number of these authors resented the attack, and retaliated by heaping abuse on Collier's head, Dryden admitted his guilt and promised to amend, saying, "If Collier be my foe, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will rejoice at my repentance." His new religion had taught him humility. A noble example is here given by an aged man and a great genius. Do you consider him mean-spirited? No, you feel that it requires courage to confess a fault candidly, and you respect that humility in others which you have not always the strength of mind to practise. But suppose that you do realise the dangers to which you are exposed, and would

fain know how to escape from them? How much help you can get from the instructions given by the Director, for these instructions are prepared especially to suit your needs. Again, most Sodalities have libraries for the use of members. How much good advice and help you can derive from the life of a saint or a spiritual reading. If the book does not give you the desired knowledge then you can apply to the Director and explain your particular case. You are not friendless and alone in the world if you are a Child of Mary. But what if you have yielded to temptation and offended God grievously? Does not the monthly Communion come round and bring home to you the necessity of going to confession and making your peace with God?

But for this reminder, perhaps you would have remained for months without the Sacraments. Truly we may say of the Sodality what has been said of religious life, that in it "one falls less frequently and rises more quickly."

What a *source of graces* the Sodality is for us! It consecrates us to Mary, places us under her especial care, provides us with means of grace, with instructions, unites us in prayer, gives us good examples, opportunities of practising the virtues of zeal, patience, charity, etc. Then comes our yearly retreat as a crowning grace. To how many has the Sodality been a stepping-stone to the higher and perfect life which is "the best part" for us when God calls us to it. Many a nun, now devoting her life to works of charity, had the first inspiration to give herself wholly to Christ at the yearly retreat.

Your Sodality is *an honour.* Do you esteem it as such? Do you value your title of Child of Mary? Do you put yourself out to fulfil its obligations, or do you consider your meeting as a resource when you have no other engagement? Do you attend the meetings on a wet day, or are you afraid of spoiling your best dress and too proud to put on your every-day dress on a Sunday? It is said that a peasant once bought an umbrella at a fair. As he was returning home a heavy shower came on. Poor Hodge was in a terrible state of mind. What about his new umbrella! At last a bright thought struck him: he took off his overcoat, wrapped the umbrella up in it, and ran with his precious burden to the nearest shelter, which happened to be an inn. Here Hodge drew forth his umbrella, triumphantly observing, "It's not wet." Some of our members have another way of keeping their umbrellas dry—they stay at home!

Lastly, your Sodality is a *pledge of perseverance.* When you were received the priest prayed for you that God might grant you "time to live well, the gift of doing good, and constancy to persevere therein, that you may arrive happily at the inheritance of life eternal." In being a faithful Child of Mary your are sure to serve Jesus Christ well. You cannot be a member without having to practise charity, which is a gage of predestination. It is impossible to belong to an Association without having to "bear and forbear."

Perseverance is a grace which we cannot merit by our efforts; therefore, any Association which

helps to keep us in the right path, which urges us on to be generous in God's service, is of priceless value. Cling, then, to your Sodality, Child of Mary, devote yourself heart and soul to its interests; Jesus will never abandon the soul zealous for Mary's honour, and Mary will lead us to her Divine Son. Ask her to do so in these beautiful words:

Mother of Christ, this will I ask of Thee:
When the voyage is o'er
Oh, stand on the shore
And show Him at length to me.

THE CHILD OF MARY IN HER HOME.

PIT-A-PATTER, pit-a-patter! Listen to the rain steadily beating against the window-pane. It has been falling all the morning. Look out, what a leaden sky! How disconsolate Nature looks! The birds take refuge in their nests. Indoors as well as outdoors looks dark and gloomy. Presently the sky clears up, a ray of sunshine struggles through the clouds. All brightens up, the birds begin to sing as if to make up for lost time, the flowers lift up their drooping heads. Nature welcomes the sun's rays. Indoors, too, all looks cheerful again. As we watch the transformation produced by a ray of sunshine, the thought comes, "Are there no other rays of sunshine that brighten up the home?" Yes, a loving daughter, devoted to her parents and home, is truly also a ray of sunshine. Although we can say in all truth,

Labour is sweet, for Thou hast toiled,

nevertheless labour is also a punishment for sin and has its dark side. How often a mother has to labour beyond her strength to make ends meet! How many secret sorrows parents have to bear! Work is slack or badly paid. Quarter-day comes round and does not always find the rent ready. Crops are meagre and speculations turn out badly. Shares

cease to pay a dividend. Here one member of the household, perhaps the bread-winner, is threatened with a deadly disease. There it is the anxiety rather than their temporal cares, caused by the misconduct of a loved and erring child. These and countless other worries are the daily lot of parents, and each "knoweth the bitterness of his own heart."

Is there no remedy for these troubles? Can the burden of sorrow be lightened? Yes: next to prayer and humble submission to the will of God, may we not place the cheering influence of a child whose aim in life is to brighten up the home circle and thus be the joy of her parents? A loving greeting to a father or mother when they return home after a day's toil is a ray of sunshine. Hark, is not that a distant footfall! While you are listening the dog jumps up, runs to the hall, capering about wildly and showing his joy. He has recognised his master's step and runs to welcome him. How often the dog shows more pleasure on seeing his master than a child shows on meeting her father. Have you never sat in an armchair devouring a book, selfishly engrossed in your pleasure, perhaps even shedding tears over the misfortunes of a hero who never existed except in an author's brain? Have you never neglected a positive duty because you had not the courage to put aside your book until you knew which girl the hero married, and whether the other one committed suicide or married some one else and lived happily ever after? While you were thus living in an imaginary world, a father's meal was not ready, the children were crying to be put

to bed, and mother had but one pair of hands. If you would be a ray of sunshine, offer your services, do not wait to be asked or give your aid grudgingly Often a mother refrains from asking her child a service because she fears a frown.

How many fathers, who habitually pass their evenings out of doors, would remain at home, if the children made home agreeable! Parents frequently go to great expense to have their children taught music, yet how often the children will refuse to play for their parents pleasure. They are delighted to show off their talent in public, of course, after the customary pressing and time-honoured excuses of "a bad cold," "want of practice," and "loss of music." One means of amusing others is to read an interesting book while the others work. Perhaps the book that amuses others does not interest you. In that case your act of charity is all the more meritorious. Or you may hate cards, and yet that is your father's favourite game. Play it with all your heart, you can gain merit for Heaven by playing cards to please some one else, and the more you dislike it the more merit you acquire. In a word, put yourself last, devote yourself generously to giving pleasure, and you will find your joy in seeing others happy. This is such a simple, safe road to holiness, and there is no fear of illusion in this well-beaten path.

A daughter should be her mother's right hand. Do not be afraid to soil your hands. If we may believe all we are told, Pears' soap works wonders in the matter of cleansing. Was our dear Lady afraid to do menial work? Do you think that

Jesus, the Divine Carpenter of Nazareth, had soft white hands? Every girl should know how to make herself useful. The home is woman's little kingdom. You may be rich and have servants to wait upon you, still the law of labour binds you in common with your poorer sisters. All must work in some way or other. Learn to work that you may be able to govern a household. Ladies love to air their pet grievance, "the bad servants of our days." yet often they themselves are to blame. They know nothing of household work, and exact ridiculous things of their servants; consequently the latter, profiting by their mistress' ignorance, do just as they please. We are told riches "shall make themselves wings like those of an eagle, and shall fly towards Heaven." You may some day have to work for your daily bread. Be wise and prepare for an emergency by learning all you can, for knowledge is easily stored up.

What a life of remorse those children lay up for themselves who treat their parents with coldness and indifference! Here is a very sad example. A young man once gave his mother a great deal of pain by his wild conduct. He was not wanting in affection for her, but having a naturally weak character was led into evil by bad companions. Once in a drunken brawl he wounded a policeman and was taken into custody. His mother, who suffered from heart disease, hearing of his arrest, was taken dangerously ill. Permission was obtained for the lad to visit his mother on her death-bed. Escorted by two jailers he

went home, but was too late to ask her forgiveness; she expired as he crossed the threshold. Can you imagine his agony of remorse? How bitterly he sobbed as he reproached himself with being the murderer of his mother. What a sorrow for the rest of his life! The poor mother obtained by her death what she had so earnestly desired during life—the amendment of her boy. After three years' imprisonment he began a new and better life.

Dr. Johnson furnishes us with a beautiful example of a fault nobly expiated. In his youth Samuel Johnson was restless and proud. He chafed at the drudgery and restraint of helping his father at the bookstall in the market at Uttoxeter. One day his father was too ill to serve behind the bookstall, and Sam was asked to take his father's place for the day. The boy flatly refused; so the father, ill as he was, went to the market-place as usual. Sam's heart smote him all day long, but he was too proud to yield. Half-a-century later, in the height of his fame, Dr. Johnson did voluntary penance for his boyish pride. He tell us: "To do away with this sin of disobedience, I this day went in a post-chaise to Uttoxeter, and going into the market at the time of business, uncovered my head and stood with it bare an hour before the stall which my father had formerly used, exposed to the sneers of the standers-by and to the inclemency of the weather; a penance by which I trust I have propitiated Heaven for this only instance, I believe, of contumacy to my father." Do you think less highly of Dr.

Johnson for his humility? You cannot but honour him. If ever you pass near Uttoxeter go and visit the market-place, and the inhabitants will point out to you the spot where the Doctor stood. It is marked by a stone on which an inscription is engraved in praise of his filial affection and humility.

Uttoxeter was proud of a man who could thus atone for a sin of his youth. If you have ever offended in like manner, see how you can repair your fault.

It is a pleasant sight to see a daughter who is not only a help, but also a companion for her mother, who prefers her mother's society to that of strangers. A Child of Mary should be ready to go out with her mother or to stay at home for her pleasure when required. She should give her mother her confidence. How many girls consider themselves exemplary daughters when they *condescend* to inform their parents of their intentions. "Mother, I am going out"; or, "I am leaving my situation." The idea of asking permission or advice never occurs to them. Even when it is a question of such a serious thing as getting married, they make their choice and do not even tell their parents, much less consult them. In the old law what importance God attached to the respect due to parents. The only commandment "with promise" is for those who honour their parents. "Honour thy father and thy mother that thou mayst be long-lived upon the land." We are told that Jesus was "subject" to His parents; and should we not, as Children of Mary, imitate our Divine elder Brother?

Sometimes a daughter is called to be an apostle

in her family. When her parents live a worldly life, it is a deep sorrow to a fervent Child of Mary. "We are bound to assist our parents in their wants, both spiritual and temporal," the Catechism tells us. If our parents lead a godless life it is our duty to pray for them, and to use all the means in our power to bring them back to God. Of course, you must not preach to them, but use all your influence and profit by any occasion that presents itself. The following story will illustrate this. A young girl, the only child of wealthy parents, had been brought up in a convent. Kate was a fervent Child of Mary, and for some time the Prefect of the Congregation. On her return home she was forced by her parents to go into society. In spite of a daily round of visits, parties, and theatres, she did not neglect her religion, God always had His time. Her father idolised her, and lavised on her all the luxuries which wealth can procure. Notwithstanding all these pleasures there was a lasting sorrow in the child's heart. He had neglected his religion for many years, and that God would give him the grace of repentance was the one prayer that Kate offered from childhood. At last her twenty-first birthday drew near, and her father asked her what present she would like. Kate replied, "Give me what you please, dear Father, for the present I should like most would cost you too much." Like another Herod he declared his readiness to spend even half his fortune on his darling child, and he pressed her to name the object of her desire. Kate promised to do so before evening. That night when he went to his room he found a note. Wondering what his child

desired so earnestly, he opened it eagerly, and read these words : "Dearest Father,—You have promised to give me my heart's desire, *no matter what it may cost you.* My one request is that on my twenty-first birthday you will go with me to Holy Communion. Nothing else you can give will afford me such real pleasure. It has been the object of my prayer for years. I know you will grant it to me since you promised me my request 'at any cost.' —Your loving child, KATE." The poor father was stunned at the contents, "At any cost." Yes, he had said those words, but with a very different meaning. There was a fierce struggle in his breast, but God conquered, and when Kate's birthday came father and child knelt side by side for the first time at the altar of God. What a joy for his child, for the angels of God, and for the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Truly a child can be an apostle in her family. There are other ways of helping our parents spiritually. When they are ill a daughter can recite the Rosary or read a few pages of a good book ; she can see that the priest is called for in time, and numerous other occasions offer themselves to her zeal.

Sometimes a child is called upon to help her parents in their temporal needs. It is a positive duty, when the parents are in want, for the children to provide for them as far as they can. How many sacrifices parents have to make in order to bring up a family, and what child could see her father or mother lack that which it is in her power to supply? If your parents are fairly well off, do not force them to go beyond their means to procure you luxuries ; if

they are poor and you are earning money, help them to the best of your power.

Do you see now what a vast field home offers for practising virtue? How true it is,

> The daily round, the common task,
> Will furnish all we ought to ask,
> Room to deny ourselves.

Strive to profit by these occasions; do not leave them to others; do not grumble because you are called upon to make sacrifices for your parents. No man who finds a treasure is so foolish as to complain because those who preceded him did not pick it up. See how far you are a ray of sunshine, a helper, a consoler, and an apostle in your home. If you have not fulfilled these obligations in the past, begin now to draw down upon yourself the blessing of God for time and for eternity. Be brave enough to change for the better, in spite of "Mrs. Grundy."

CHILDREN OF MARY AT HOME.

"THY children as olive plants round about thy table," was God's promise to the Jews of old. A numerous family is a blessing from God, for each member is an immortal soul given by God to the parents to be trained for Him. It is easier to train children for God in a large family than in a small one. An only child has fewer means of sanctification than one who has brothers and sisters. She is more likely to grow up selfish, proud, and conscious of her own worth than one who has necessarily had to put up with others.

Have you ever noticed the pebbles on the sea-beach, how smooth they are? There are no sharp corners. Now whence come these stones? They come from the rocks; they are broken off by the action of water and varying temperature. Look at the *débris* at the foot of a cliff after a thaw! There you see a heap of stones, but they do not resemble the pebbles of the beach. They have sharp corners—yet all pebbles were once like these sharp stones. How have they been rounded? By the action of the stream. As they were carried along in the bed of a river, the constant friction wore off the corners; a deposit of valuable alluvial soil was thus obtained, and the pebbles were rounded. The corners were removed and the

particles even could be utilised. So in a large family, as the members go down the stream of life together the constant friction wears off the sharp corners of the characters, nay the defects are even utilised. For, if a fault is the means of teaching us to know ourselves better and to be more humble, it has not been all loss. But in a family, if we are to profit by the constant friction of character, certain conditions must be fulfilled. A Child of Mary in a large family has a noble work to perform and she will accomplish it, provided she can give up her own will and think of others.

There must be different characters in a family. It would be very tame if it were otherwise. John O'Groat is said to have had seven sons ; that these sons should not quarrel as to which should take precedence, John had the door made wide enough for all the seven to walk out abreast; but neither John O'Groat nor any other fond father could devise a means by which the defects of his children should not come in contact as long as those children live under the same roof. It is a good thing that this friction is unavoidable. Suppose you are one of a large family, and that you are neither the eldest nor the youngest. In that case you have special duties to those who are much older, to those nearer your own age and to the little ones.

Let us begin with the elder brothers and sisters. To them you owe deference and submission, less than to your parents except in the case where they take a parent's place. Most certainly they have your good at heart. Consult them in your diffi-

culties when you know they can help you. Keep up a loving intercourse when you are separated. Remember to write to them for their birthdays. When a Child of Mary says, "I do not know my sister's birthday," you may conclude there is little love between these sisters. These little attentions do so much to keep up fraternal charity. Do not take up an aggressive attitude towards your brothers and sisters, or look upon them as your natural enemies. Half the coldness that exists between brothers and sisters is caused by the "mine and thine." Love of money or temporal advantages cause brother to rise against brother. Our Lord has said "that a man's enemies shall be they of his own household"; it is true He speaks here of persecution for His sake. This, if it fall to our lot, we must accept, but we must not let it be caused by what even the world stigmatises as "filthy lucre." Sometimes an elder brother or sister may be the parents' cross. Then we must bear with them, and help our parents to carry their cross. Never speak against your brothers and sisters. They should rank next to our parents in our heart. How often a loving sister may bring a brother back to God and to his family. Do not drive them farther away by your coldness and anger. So often it happens that, when a member of the family commits a fault we feel more keenly the disgrace to ourselves than the injury the offender does to God and to himself. Selfishness is at the root of our anger; this produces irritation, which not infrequently leads to dislike and hatred. When a certain Saint

saw a fault committed, he used to say: "Poor Jesus, poor Jesus Christ!" We are apt to pity ourselves instead. It is natural to feel the disgrace, but the dishonour done to God should touch us more deeply.

We are, perhaps, more in contact with those of our own age. What dangers await us here! The first is frequently a spirit of contradiction, proceeding from a fixed determination of not giving up our rights. "Our rights!" what do we mean by this? Generally on our lips it means a certain liberty to have all our own way, to choose the best for self, to disregard the interests of others. Have we these rights? What about charity then? It takes two to quarrel: if one will not, the other cannot; but we must not yield in an aggravating or contemptuous manner. Do so for the love of God, because you value peace and purity of soul more than the paltry thing about which you are tempted to dispute. Be willing to take the second place. The last is taken, Jesus has claimed that for Himself, and the more we humble ourselves, the nearer we get to Him. So many quarrels might be avoided if we would only have a little more consideration for others. You know that your sister has an engagement, and that you cannot both be out at the same time. Do not promise to go somewhere just that evening when any other time would do as well. Some tickets are sent for a concert; but there are not enough for all. Give up your place without showing your disappointment. It is what our dear Mother Mary would have done. There are

presents to choose from; let others choose first. Perhaps you will say, "Am I always to give up?" No, not always; never when it is a question of duty: but those who can yield are the best off after all, for they will win more by gentleness and condescension than by the strenuous upholding of their rights. Others will uphold them for you if you trouble less about them. One who can yield wins hearts, and people will sacrifice pleasure generously for such a one in their turn. We are all naturally so intensely selfish; instinctively we think of self first. It rains; what a bore, *I* wanted to go out! We do not think how it affects others. It is settled that you are to spend your holidays in Brighton. "How horrid! *I* wanted to go to Yarmouth!" We forget that others have not, perhaps, seen Brighton. In any event, our first thought, unless with God's care we watch over ourselves, is, "How does this affect me?" A bishop, who had been turned out of his palace by some of the anti-Catholic laws of France, was asked where he lived. He replied: "Outside of my own house." In the spiritual life, as far as selfishness is concerned, it is a good thing to live outside of one's own heart.

In some families teasing is the order of the day. Is it right or wrong? That depends on the motive and on the victim. Do we tease to show off our cleverness, or to show up the defects of others? Do we always attack one who cannot retaliate? Do we provoke that one to offend God? Then it is wrong to tease, for in all three cases we wound charity. Teasing helps to "rub off the the corners.',

Just as satire reaches those who elude the law, so teasing may cure certain defects where parental authority has failed. As a general rule, you may tease provided the victim joins in the laugh, that you do not go too far, that you are willing to allow others to tease you, and that you choose the right time and place. Perhaps you hate being teased, and yet you are constantly attacked. How can you ward off the attacks of the enemy? There is only one way—pretend you like it, and the assaults will soon cease.

Some girls imagine that all their belongings share the privilege reserved to relics—namely, that of not being touched. Some one has touched a book or a box belonging to them. Well, what then? Is it really worth leaving your peace of mind and flying into a passion for so slight an offence? Be willing to lend, and esteem charity, more highly than any earthly treasure.

Sometimes selfishness brings a cloud into the home. What a disagreeable sight it is to see a girl sulk for days and even weeks. She will not condescend to explain what has offended her; often there is no real cause. It is a mere suspicion that this or that observation was meant for her. For example: father remarked that Mary's progress in music gave him great pleasure; thereupon Blanche imagined that her father meant to insinuate that she was not making progress. So both her father and sister feel the effects of her displeasure. Mary may not touch her music. If the father asks Blanche to play she replies closely: "You had better ask Mary, Father, she plays *so much better* than I do." Thus

Blanche remains ill-disposed, perhaps for days, neglects practising her music, is inattentive at her lessons, snubs Mary, and would show her anger to her father if she dared. All these faults are committed for a pure imagination. Even had it been true that her sister made more progress than she did, this would have been no excuse for offending God.

Meals often afford opportunities to practise charity. All the family meet together, perhaps for the first time that day. An unpleasant subject of conversation is introduced, different opinions are put forth, and the discussion ends by some one either leaving the table in a temper or sitting sulkily there and refusing to eat. Frequently anger at meal-times arises from such a simple thing as a joint of meat underdone or overdone; perhaps there is too much salt in the soup or too much sugar in the pudding. How unworthy of a Christian to show anger and disturb the peace of the home circle by grumbling at such a trifle. When are we to practise mortification if not in such little things? No doubt the cook should do her duty; but if she fails to do so that is no reason why we should neglect ours. Our duty is to keep back angry words and try to keep peace. How often, when dining out, we have to put up with things badly cooked! Shall we do less for God than we do for etiquette? True virtue lies in this daily friction borne for the love of God. Perhaps you say: "I do try, but I fail so often." Never mind, go on trying. How much oftener would you fall if you did not try? At least avoid deliberate sins, and God will bless your goodwill

and enable you to conquer the sins of frailty. Never wish that you had no occasions of falling. It is only "practice that makes perfect," and God loves you too much to let you lack these means of sanctification.

How should you behave towards those younger than yourself? Here the duties are chiefly good example and amiability. There is a negative side to the question. We must not give a bad example, for bad example, like the ripples on the water, widens out on every side of us. Never let the little ones hear you speak disrespectfully of your parents or superiors. Never bribe them to conceal your faults, or make use of them to help you to commit sin. How often a girl gets her little brother to post letters which she does not wish mother to see. Sometimes she even teaches the little ones to tell lies in order to screen herself. At other times she will treat the little ones tyrannically, especially when the parents are absent. All these things are bad training for a child. The example of a giddy, frivolous life, when pleasure is the one thing sought, and dress and personal appearance the chief subject of conversation, is a fatal example for children. When they grow up they will imitate what they have seen, and who knows but what they may go further?

There is also a positive side of your duty. Be gentle with them, sympathise with their little sorrows, help them when you can. Put down your work to mend a broken toy. Be willing to tell them stories; help them prudently when they are in disgrace, and take part in their joys. All

this means self-denial on our part; but, inasmuch as we do it unto these little ones we do it unto Christ Himself. Now, ask yourself how you fulfil your duty to those at home? See where you might improve and take a generous resolution. How happy a home would be in which every member sought to put self on one side and to please others. Yes, it would be a paradise on earth. Let your home be this paradise as far as you are concerned, and give Our Lady the joy of seeing that you are taking Nazareth as the model of what a home should be. Let us ask her to teach us the difficult lesson of putting God first, our neighbour next, and self last *or nowhere.*

THE CHILD OF MARY IN THE SICK-ROOM.

WOMAN has received from God a special mission to help the weak and suffering. It is her place to train the little child and to minister by the sick-bed. A Child of Mary may be called upon to help in nursing a member of her family, and it is right she should know what to do for the spiritual good of her patient. A few rules to follow in the sick-room may be useful, especially for those Children of Mary who, by their profession, are called to tend the sick. For those who are not trained nurses it would be well to learn something about the care of a patient. There are plenty of works on hygiene to be had at the public libraries, and a few hours spent in reading one of these will be usefully employed. How much suffering is sometimes caused by the ignorance of the simplest rules about nursing the sick. The doctor's prescriptions must be carefully carried out; for the cure of the patient depends, humanly speaking, on these being followed. Many a life has been lost through the carelessness or imprudence of a nurse. However, this is not a treatise on hygiene, so we pass on to the care the nurse should have for the soul of the patient, and here she has a noble mission to accomplish.

The cases which a Child of Mary is called to

nurse are sometimes long, but there is no actual danger of death. An invalid needs constant care and attention. Suppose you have a sister who is frequently ill, you may reap a whole harvest of acts of charity. There are plenty of little services you can render ; often you must lay aside your work to read to her. Illness makes a person peevish, and this is hard to bear ; for when we try our best the patient is frequently still dissatisfied, or she takes a dislike to her nurse and will not eat what the latter brings her, but will accept the same thing from another person. All these little worries are trying, especially when you feel that you have done your best. Charity helps us to suffer them with patience and, if we reflect how difficult we find it to accept these little trials, we shall see that when a person is in pain it must be harder still to conquer self. You will say that your sister is exacting and imagines ailments. This may be true ; but it does not excuse your being harsh, for often these symptoms are a feature of her disease. In any case it is better to err on the side of charity than to be too severe. The profit is all for you, since these contradictions are means of sanctification. St. Francis of Sales says that we must support our neighbour even in his whims and caprices. Be willing to give some spiritual aid, such as saying the Rosary, or reading the life of a saint ; and do not let a sister remain without the Sacraments because she is not dangerously ill.

Now take the case of a person who is in danger of death. Evidently the first precaution is to see that the priest is sent for in time. If this be

neglected the patient may lose consciousness and thus be unable to make a confession. But you may say, "Suppose they are not Catholics?" In that case you can still try to raise their heart to God and call in a minister. If they are in good faith and believe firmly in their religion, God will excuse their ignorance. If the patient be a Catholic, see that there is a crucifix and some religious prints on the wall. Be careful to have a blessed candle in the house and to put the holy water stoup close to the bed. The scapular should not be forgotten. The patient must wear it in order to gain the indulgence. A mother once took off her child's scapular because she imagined it was not right to let it be soiled by the moisture from the poultices. If it is soiled get another, but do not leave the patient without one. Give the patient a rosary. This is a devotion which requires little mental effort; say it with the sick person. Suppose the person is to receive the last Sacraments, then you must prepare the room for the ceremony. All must be as clean as possible; arrange the sheets so that you can uncover the feet easily. Then have a table near the bed, cover it with a clean cloth and put a crucifix on a stand in the centre. On each side place a candlestick and use blessed candles if you have any. You can also put two vases with a few flowers; but not many, as the perfume might be too powerful. Have some holy water at hand, and put a small glass with a little water in it for the priest to rinse his fingers. This is all that is required for Holy Viaticum. If Extreme Unction is to be given, put a few small

pieces of bread on a plate for the priest to wipe his fingers on, and a second plate with some little pieces of cotton wool, and then all is ready for the last Sacraments. The patient must also be prepared. When people are very ill they cannot collect their thoughts as at other times. A Christian nurse has then a great duty to perform. She must pray with them at short intervals and encourage them to suffer patiently in union with Jesus on the Cross. There are so many beautiful thoughts on suffering. Here are a few: *Suffering passes; having suffered never passes. Jesus is never nearer to us than when we suffer. We never find the Cross without Jesus, nor Jesus without His Cross. Our dear Lord, in His infinite mercy, is purifying us on earth and shortening our purgatory that we may see Him in glory sooner. By our suffering we can obtain graces for those we love.* The last words of a prelate gives us a beautiful thought. When asked if he suffered much he replied, "*I am crucified. Alleluia.*" Many other consoling truths can be found in books for the sick. We can speak of the joys of Heaven, the possession of God for all eternity, the loving Mother who awaits us, the joy of seeing Jesus face to face, the happiness of never sinning again, of meeting those who have passed hence; for as the family breaks up on earth it gathers around God's throne and we shall be again united. All these thoughts are not to be suggested at one time; just repeat one gently now and again. Make short acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition. Try to find out the special prayers that your patient prefers. Choose such as these:—

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." "Thy will be done." "As the hart panteth after the fountains of the waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." The Psalms furnish us with numerous ejaculatory prayers; notice particularly the 50th and the 22nd. Take care to use some that are indulgenced. If the person is speechless, speak of the silence of Jesus on the Cross, and even when the patient seems unconscious it is well to suggest a prayer from time to time. The great thing is not to weary the sick, they can bear so little. You may perceive that your patient is tempted, for the devil often tries a last assault against faith and hope. This is generally before the end; for God's servants die in peace even when the fear of death has haunted them all their lives. In the case of those who have neglected God there may be fierce temptations against hope. Use holy water, and pray fervently for the sick person. Now and then say a prayer aloud, and take care to choose an appropriate one; for example, if the patient is tempted to despair, make acts of hope. Have a blessed candle at hand to light during the agony. The most meritorious act a sick person can make is the sacrifice of his life, so be careful to suggest this act from time to time. Above all, never lie to the dying. It is cruel to let them be hurried into eternity unprepared. Nor should sleeping draughts be given to make them unconscious, except with great prudence; for the last moments of life are precious, and we deprive them of the merit of their sufferings and render them incapable of prayer.

From a sick-room all news of the world must be banished. Few visitors should be admitted and their visits ought to be short. Care should be taken not to whisper in the sick-room under the impression that the patient is unconscious. The sick may appear unconscious when they are not so, then the sense of hearing is often keener than in health.

You will say all this is comparatively easy when the one we are nursing is a stranger; but how can we do all this when we are tending one we dearly love? It can be done if we rise above self and think more of the eternal interest of a soul than of our own feelings. We must pray for calm and resignation, and try to uphold the soul that is passing away. Here is a beautiful example. A young girl knew that her mother would probably die suddenly. One day the mother came in from the garden and staggered to the sofa, saying, "I feel so faint, get me some water." The daughter rushed to her mother and perceived the pallor of death on her face. Forgetting herself she had the courage to say, "Mother, make an act of contrition, Jesus is at hand." The dying woman understood, and had just articulated with difficulty the words suggested, "My God, I am sorry that I have offended Thee," when the Master called and the spirit returned to God Who made it. True love gives birth to heroic deeds, and this is one of them. Here is an example of the contrary. A girl of fourteen years of age was dying; the mother was by her side, now screaming frantically and clasping her child in arms, now telling her that she was

getting better and promising to buy her all kinds of things. The child grew worse; still the poor mother continued in this wild strain until two Children of Mary who lived near coaxed the mother out of the room, left her with some neighbour while they remained with the dying girl and did their best to prepare her for the next world. We pity the poor mother, but we cannot but feel that such love was almost cruelty when it led her to deceive her dying child.

When God has taken those we love, then comes the great duty of Christian resignation, and it is good to offer our sacrifice for the repose of their soul. Such a sacrifice is very meritorious, and may obtain great graces for those we love. Perhaps God awaits it as the price of their release from purgatory. Prayer for their soul should be our great care, and it is preferable to spend money on Masses rather than on flowers. The latter is after all but a pagan custom. Flowers are looked upon as a token of respect for the departed, but what good can this do their soul? How much money is wasted on them. There is a reaction against this custom, and some of our greatest men have given an example in asking that no wreaths might be sent for the funeral. It would be well if Catholics would make a stand against the practice.

After death the body should be laid out in a Catholic manner; it is usual to place a crucifix or a rosary in the hands. Prepare a little altar in the mortuary chamber. Let us say a word about going to Mass before the funeral takes

place. It is customary in some places not to go until after the funeral, but surely it is a positive duty to break through such a custom. We need strength and our dear ones need prayers, and where can we get strength or pray better than in God's house during Holy Mass? We can go to a Low Mass, and if it is painful to hear our departed one prayed for, we can offer this for the repose of the deceased. Then there is the duty of having Masses said. So often the money spent in this way bears so small a proportion with that which is spent on the funeral, mourning, and gravestone. Yet, if we consulted the real interest of those whom God has called hence, should we not think more of obtaining for them that eternal rest for which they are, perhaps, longing in purgatory? Is it because our dead are patiently

> Letting the fire burn out their stains,
> And worshipping God's Purity,

that we are to forget them? It is a mistake to put our relations in Heaven too soon. St. Bernard prayed for his mother seven years and then ceased, believing her to be with God. He was warned in a vision that she still needed prayers. The anniversaries of deaths should be kept up by having a Mass said. If our friends were alive we should give them a birthday present; now that they have left us, a Mass is the greatest offering we can make for them. It may mean a privation, yet is a duty we owe our parents, and God will not allow us to be forgotten when our turn comes to pass through purgatory if we have helped others. "Blessed are

the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Death has a message for us all. One day we must go hence. To watch by a death-bed teaches us the value of time, the shortness of life, and the necessity of being ready. How often we see a funeral pass. Perhaps it is a Protestant who has gone to "the house of his eternity." In any case, get into the habit of always saying a prayer for the repose of the soul of the person whom you see being carried to the grave. There are so many who have no one to pray for them. We pray for the conversion of a sinner, and perhaps he refuses the grace God sends him; but the dead profit fully by the prayers we say for the repose of their souls, and if the one for whom we are praying does not need it, the prayer will avail some other suffering soul. Our turn must come some day, perhaps very soon; in the meantime we must obey the Master's command: "Watch and pray, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh."

ON THE CHOICE OF A FRIEND.

"SHE is all alone in the world." What a chill these words strike to the heart. How we feel for the one of whom they are spoken. "Alone in the world." Is this true, though? Not quite, for that person still has God's protection on earth, a Mother in Heaven, an Angel Guardian by her side, and the sympathy of those who utter these words. Yet suppose a girl to be cast on her own resources, to have, young as she is, to face the stern realities of life: she needs a visible friend to love and comfort her. The heart is made to love; doubtless God is to be the first object of her affections, but she feels the need of others to love for His sake. How many have been driven to rush unbidden into the presence of their Creator because the crushing sense of loneliness has overwhelmed them. It is not good for man to be alone admits of more than one interpretation. The human heart is often bowed down with grief. The burden of sorrow is more than it can bear alone; the imperative need of a friend is felt, to whom it can communicate its sorrows and thus obtain relief. Even when the burden is a grievous sin, which we should naturally desire to conceal, and perhaps have concealed for years, yet at last we often finish by confessing it to a friend in order to ease our mind.

This is the case not only with Catholics, who

practise confession, but even Protestants have been known to reveal a fault, to incriminate themselves openly and accept the penalty when the burden of guilt became too heavy for them to bear. Again, our mind is incessantly in action, we are full of thoughts and plans, we want to communicate and interchange ideas with our fellows, and we naturally choose a friend. Notice the word *choose* a friend, not pick up or take the first one that presents herself. When we have to choose a thing we are guided by certain considerations. For example, you go to buy a dress; if you are a sensible girl you must think before you part with your money whether the material is good, the colour suitable and lasting, the price within your means. In choosing a friend we must be guided by reasonable motives.

What are the qualities which it is desirable that our friend should have? There are several, and a few words on each may be helpful. Our friend should be on an equal footing with us as regards birth, fortune, education. It is a great mistake for girls to seek friends who hold a position in life far above themselves. It puts both parties in a false position. There can be no visiting on terms of equality. The one who is poorer will grow discontented with her own rank in life, she may even get to feel ashamed of her parents; her discontent will lead her to be extravagant, to go beyond her means to procure the luxuries in which her friend can freely indulge. She gets dissatisfied with her home and its humble surroundings. On the other hand, her wealthy friend is embarrassed, she cannot

introduce her companion to her own circle of acquaintances yet does not like to hurt her feelings. Such a friendship as this cannot last long. It is based on unstable equilibrium and will soon be overthrown.

Between two friends there should be unison of sentiments and aspirations. How can a serious, pious girl choose a giddy worldling for a companion? There is nothing in common between them. All that the one holds dear the other despises or ignores. If there is any friendship, it can only be on condition that one of the two modifies her views and meets her friend half-way. It is rarely the butterfly of society who will consent to deprive herself of vain pleasure. Generally it is the serious girl who becomes frivolous. It is a mistake to keep up intimate friendship with a votary of the world on the ground that we may do her good. She is far more likely to do us harm. If you put one bad apple in a basket and surround it with good apples, the latter will not benefit the former, but all will be spoilt. Two girls who are religious may be very good friends, though one may have more piety than the other. Our very occupation often forms a bond of union; two artists, two musicians, or two students will generally get on together. They have a common interest in life. If we love our occupation we like to speak about it; our friend understands us, and so we agree well. Above all, our friend should have the same aims as regards the next world. Two friends that are really striving to love and serve God can be of great service to each other.

In a friend we should seek for compatibility of character or direct contrast. Here there may be greater varieties than in social position and tastes —for a strong nature can help a weak, clinging nature just as the oak supports the ivy and enables it to rise. The weak character finds support and is helped on by her friend. The strong nature likes to feel others dependent, and to help them up; thus the friendship is cemented. Girls who resemble each other also frequently agree well; but in general those characters that vary harmonise best: as in music, harmony is more agreeable than unison. In either case one quality should exist in the character, namely, constancy. Those who are unstable are for ever changing friends. They are quickly infatuated, and as quickly disenchanted. The name of their past friends is "legion," for they were many. Though their acquaintance with a person may only date from a few days or weeks, yet they vow eternal friendship; but the first time their friend displeases them the vow of eternal friendship is commuted to another object.

Between friends there are mutual obligations: briefly they may be summed up under two headings. Firstly, loyalty and truth; secondly, real charity, which presupposes unselfishness and devotedness. We must be loyal and true to our friends who have given us proofs of their affection.

> The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel:
> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade.

Loyalty and truth suppose frankness in expressing our opinion, saying exactly what we mean, and that without bluntness. It means also accepting the same, "for better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy." There can be no true friendship if one friend dare not speak the truth to the other. Truth excludes flattery, for flattery is a lie. We must have convictions of our own, and also courage to own them and to act accordingly. Most people of weak characters have no convictions. They can be talked over by any one. Their opinions are always the same as those with whom they speak. There are many "Vicars of Bray" living, but they are not noble characters. Men may laugh at the "Vicar of Bray," but they do not erect a monument to him. There is nothing great about false complaisance. Never give way to it if you would not have the letters V.B. follow your name in your neighbour's opinion. Loyalty implies further being true to your friend at all times; it excludes taking up or dropping a person as it suits you or making a convenience of them. A friend is something more noble than a convenience.

True charity goes further, it loves friends enough to pain them when necessary. The truth is sometimes painful to hear, especially when it condemns us. Now our friend may be on the wrong path, she may be getting vain, haughty, or indiscreet. *Many* will speak of her faults to others, *few* have the courage or the affection to tell her candidly and gently the truth about herself. Fewer still have the humility to accept a plain

truth, just because it goes home and wounds self-love. Put some salt on your hand, it does not hurt you unless you have a cut, then you feel the smarting. So it is with plain truth, it is only painful because it falls on the festering wound of self-love. If we saw a drunken man walking along a dangerous road we should try to stop him, by force if necessary, regardless of his anger. Shall we do less for a friend?

Often we have to suffer injustice at the hands of a friend. We trusted a person; she has deserted us, she has even been deceitful and injured us. This is very hard to bear; the more we love our friend, the more we feel the blow. The wounds received in the house of a friend are deep; yet still we must be patient, remembering that the disciple is not greater than his Master. Sometimes our friend wounds us thoughtlessly; her indiscretion has involved us in difficulties. In both these cases we must forgive and forget, difficult though it may be.

A friend is one for whom we must devote ourselves; we must not expect her to be a slave, at our beck and call. No, she is an equal, and we must devote ourselves to her, and be unselfish in our love. To do this we must think of our friend's plans and consult her pleasure. Often we must bear the brunt of the world's opinion, and stand up for our friends when we know that they are right. This, of course, does not mean that we are to shield them when they do what is absolutely wrong—it means treating them as we should like to be treated, esteeming them in our heart and defending them in their absence.

There are many advantages derived from friendship. Our friend may be an *example*, a *consoler*, a *beacon* and *a counsellor*. Who has not felt the silent, gentle influence of good example? We are losing our temper, impoverishing ourselves by giving others "a piece of our mind," or refusing our services. A friend steps in and, unostentatiously offering her help, shows gentleness and forbearance. We feel vexed at first; but her gentleness conquers, we are ashamed and repent of our hastiness.

A crushing storm comes; we raise our heart to God, to our Mother in heaven and ask for strength to bear it: then instinctively we seek our friend, that she may share the burden with us. It is beautiful to "bear one another's burdens," and "so fulfil the law of Christ." We may proudly try to bear our sorrow alone, but we shall break down sooner or later: even Jesus, the Divine Master, allowed Simon to help Him to carry the Cross and rewarded him for it. Yet the Master could have carried it to Calvary borne up by love of man.

On the troubled sea of life it is difficult when the storms of temptation come to steer our course aright and often the violence of the tempest causes us to swerve from the right path. Then a true friend, like a beacon, warns us of our danger. Perhaps you were giving way to vanity, dressing beyond your means, or careless in your religious duties. The warning comes and it is to your honour if you can accept a rebuke calmly, humbly and thankfully. How often in our difficulties do

we need a guide! A trusty friend is invaluable if she have sufficient experience and a sincere desire to benefit us.

Friendship, like all that is human, has its dangers. It is good to love our friend, to be devoted; yet it is bad to be too exclusive. Some girls will not allow their friends to look at or speak to any one else: not even a dog or a bird may have any of her affection but they are jealous and sulk. As long as this jealous fit lasts even important duties are neglected. A girl who has quarrelled with her friend goes to Mass on Sunday. Generally they go together; now they are not on speaking terms for a few days. Mass begins; the two friends are in sight of each other, it is the first time this has happened since their quarrel. In all probability neither is praying devoutly; their anger seems to flame up inwardly at seeing each other. "Shall I speak? No, not unless she does. It was her fault. I will not give in." These are the thoughts that flash through the minds of one or both. In a few days all will be right; but in the meantime many faults have been committed and precious time wasted.

One great danger with a girl, who is exclusive in her affection, is that of excessive familiarity. It is good to love, to show affection; but it is exceedingly dangerous to cultivate the desire of being caressed unceasingly by our friend. This kind of affection is "of the earth, earthly." When girls give way to it the desire grows and leads them to accept lavish marks of affection indiscriminately. Even with our dearest friend there must be a certain reserve.

Excessive familiarity always degenerates into contempt; we lose our liberty when we give way to it and are won by a mark of affection. Such a character is generally weak, and will become a mere puppet if the friend be of a stronger build. To correct this weakness we must watch over the beginnings, steel our hearts to be manly and keep our independence.

Another fruitful source of evil is human respect; we fear what people will say, we cannot bear the laugh or censure of our fellow; yet, when we are in the right, we must endure even the sneers and reproaches of a friend if, indeed, she merits such a name now. On the broad road there are many who did not go there by choice, but they had not the courage to resist evil examples or advice. Human respect made them give up, one after another, all Catholic practices of devotion and finally led them to shipwreck of faith and perhaps of morals. A so-called friend gains entrance to the heart, wins a girl's affection, and henceforth she submits to be led blindly. Parents and true friends are unheeded; the girl pursues her course of folly and may regret it all her life. False friends are a terrible curse and have ruined thousands. Have you a friend? Does she merit the name? If so, remember to grapple her to your soul. Is she worthless, a cause of sin, a stumbling-block? Give her up at any cost; have the courage to break with an occasion of sin. She must cease to be your friend the moment she ceases to command your respect. "*Sursum corda*" is a good motto for gentle, weak

natures that are tempted to cling to whatever presents itself. "*Sursum corda*," my heart is for God; I must not soil it with impure love of creatures. If the love of creatures helps to raise you to God, then pour out the treasures of your charity and devotedness on them. If it drags you down to earth, quit them as you value your immortal soul. Remember there is a Friend that cleaveth closer than a brother. Let him guide you in the choice of an earthly friend.

ON CONVERSATION.

GOD has called us to live in a family, to associate with our fellows, not to retire into a desert and lead a hermit's life. In our family and circle of acquaintances there are many pure pleasures, but there are dangers against which we must guard. One of these is the use of the tongue. We cannot remain silent, we must speak ; charity and politeness exact it, to say nothing of the need of speaking, which women are specially credited with feeling. Our Lord says that we must give an account of every idle word ; St. James warns us that if a man cannot bridle his tongue his religion is vain. He compares it to a small flame which kindles a great fire. Since the management of the tongue is so difficult, it will not be useless to meditate for a few moments on the *snares* we must avoid and the *rules* we should follow in legislating for this "unruly member."

We must avoid being the first to speak. To take the lead in conversation is not the place of a young girl, especially when there are older persons present. If pride is the ruling passion it often takes this form. We like to lay down our opinions dogmatically, to monopolise the conversation ; other people cannot get a word in edgeways : evidently this is unbecoming, particularly

for a young girl and moreover fosters pride. Generally those who love to take the lead, love also to have the last word. "Alpha and Omega" is their motto. Listen to a young girl of this description, she goes on talk, talk, talk, as though she were wound up; all through the conversation there is an undercurrent running, the desire of attracting attention or of imposing her opinion. Such persons generally have a good vocabulary, but in spite of that the pronoun "I" is worn threadbare. Now in such a conversation, or rather monologue, there must needs be faults, for Holy Scripture says that in a multitude of words "there shall not want sin." They come like an inundation, wasting the land instead of fertilising it, as they might have done if used in moderation.

Boasting is another snare to avoid. How many girls are perpetually boasting of their talents, means, family, acquaintances, etc.? Sensible people laugh at them, few believe them, for all know that empty barrels give out the loudest sound. One of the fiercest persecutions that raged against Christians in China was due to the foolish boasting of a trader, who said that the Sovereign of France sent missionaries out to prepare the way for his soldiers, who would then easily conquer the country. Hundreds of Christians suffered death through this foolish boast. Here is an example nearer home. A young lady was greatly addicted to boasting of her father's wealth and of all the luxuries she enjoyed, and as usual when people boast, outstepped the truth. It happened that her father was involved in difficulties; he owed large sums of money and

was struggling hard to pay his debts, for which his creditors had consented to wait. His daughter knew nothing of these difficulties, though she had perceived certain measures of economy had been taken at home. She continued her foolish boasting in the hearing of some of her father's creditors. They believed her words, and took proceedings against the poor man, who was thus ruined by his daughter's tongue.

Petty quarrels about our rights frequently mar peace. Some people will never give up one iota of what they imagine due to them ; they cannot let a thing pass and pretend not to notice it. Here is a brief account of a scene that happened at a railway station in France, in the year 1891. The train was about to start. In the scramble for a seat a gentleman entered a compartment which was reserved for ladies, one of whom complained to the guard of the intruder, who was obliged to get out. He went in search of another place and found a smoking compartment full, in which there was a lady. Aggrieved at having been turned out himself, he insisted on his right to have a seat in a smoking compartment, even though the lady had to get out, which she accordingly did. All this took time ; finally the train started, but it was two and a half minutes late. The delay caused it to come into collision with a down express. There was a terrible shock, then agonising shrieks rent the air as one hundred and sixty souls were hurried into eternity. A little forbearance on both sides would have prevented this fearful accident.

Indiscretion is a fruitful cause of trouble. We do not think before speaking and so we pain our friends and involve ourselves in difficulties. There is "a time to speak and a time to keep silence." Through indiscretion the faults of others are revealed without necessity. Those who commit this fault generally excuse themselves by saying that they did not think; but this is no excuse, they ought to think and not run the risk of injuring their neighbour. For example, it is indiscreet to relate frightening ghost stories to young children. It is indiscreet to hint at things you may not explain, as people are almost certain to imagine the worst. It is indiscreet to tell a person all you have heard against them. If it be necessary the case is different, do it then in all Christian charity; but in nine cases out of ten it is not. If you give your authority be sure there will be a quarrel; if you do not, the person to whom you speak may suspect several and be cool with them. Few people can hear a thing of this sort calmly, fewer still refuse to listen. Unless the person be a saint, you will certainly be the cause of his commiting a sin.

A mania for contradicting is a fruitful cause of sins of the tongue, especially if two people meet who have this propensity. Some individuals live as though they existed merely to contradict. If you meet with such a person, the only way to make peace is to let them have their own way and the only way to manage them is to pretend you want them to take one course, when you wish them to take the opposite.

Acting the "moral policeman" is a common

fault. There are many who must for ever lecture and reprove their neighbours. Now people do not like being told of their faults, especially when the one who reproves has no authority. These moral policemen are terrible to support. His Majesty's police are not always on duty, but these moral policemen are never off. The only result of their perpetual admonitions is to make themselves disliked, and when it is their duty to rebuke, they produce no effect. Sometimes in a family there is one member who ruins the peace of the house by this mistaken plain-speaking. There are many faults in our neighbour which we must endure and we often spoil an object by striving to render it more perfect. This defect is due generally to a want of tact as well as to a good share of self-conceit. Often an unmarried sister, who knows nothing about children or husbands, acts the censor to all her brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces and gets no thanks for her pains.

Murmuring against superiors is another snare in conversation. Children will murmur at their parents' commands, servants against their mistresses; orders are criticised, inferiors stir up one another to rebellion; often the wood is so dry, that only a match is needed to produce the flame. It is sad to see a Christian doing the devil's work, for scandal is a terrible thing; like the circle in the water, it goes on increasing. Many people do harm by constantly introducing religious controversy. It rarely does good, for no soul was ever converted by mere arguments. To win a

soul needs prayer and faith. It is one thing to give an answer simply, when we are asked and another to be perpetually discussing religion at the wrong time and place. Charity is frequently wounded by satire. Some people are quick at repartee and to show their cleverness will say cutting, unkind things of their neighbour. Generally it is the absent or the weak who are attacked. This is cowardice and may amount to cruelty, for we have no right to cause others to suffer in order to amuse ourselves.

We must be straightforward in our words; it is wrong to twist the truth to make it mean anything we please, for this is a great source of disedification. To be frank we need not say all we think; but it is essential that we should not say the contrary. Catholics are frequently accused of untruthfulness; this arises from mistaking in what truth consists. There is no doubt that we are allowed to say "Not at home" and "I do not know," and the world knows these are polite forms for refusing to entertain or communicate information; but we are not allowed to equivocate, still less to deceive, to gain our own ends. Truth is frequently disregarded by those who profess to scorn a lie, yet who do not scruple to exaggerate; they add to their wealth, talents, pains, by representing them to be greater than they are. This is clearly a sin against truth. Distorting truth is another common form of lie. Professional forgers are too wise nowadays to attempt to manufacture false bank-notes. It is so difficult to escape detection, as bankers have their private marks. Hence they

find it more profitable to take a real bank-note and change the figures; sometimes they leave the figures and add one or two, which makes a very great difference, to their advantage. So the professional forgers of truth take some facts which they disfigure or add to, and truth serves their purpose better than falsehood. There is something so base in this: honest people feel they would rather cope with a lie than with falsified truth. Here is an example. Louise sees a book on the table; it is uncut, she takes it up, looks at the title and asks her mother if she may read it. Permission is refused, unless father allows it. The girl then asks her father if she may cut the book for him; he consents, but gives her no permission to read it. Louise takes the book, cuts it, and satisfies her curiosity. Her mother comes; Louise is so engrossed that she does not hear her mother's step. The latter, vexed at seeing her daughter with the book, scolds her for disobeying, and Louise pleads in excuse that her father gave her permission. This is nothing less than a downright lie, with distorted truth for foundation. Yet, perhaps, Louise will argue that her father did not forbid her to read the volume.

The commonest faults in conversation are detraction and calumny. There has been a great outcry against the vivisection of animals as being inhuman, yet the vivisection of our neighbour's character is far more cruel and frequently gives intense pain. A person who would shrink from deliberately causing pain to an animal will say most cruel and unjust things against her neighbour

and inflict deep wounds. A dog is muzzled lest he should bite ; but the man who could invent a muzzle for the slanderer's tongue would be a benefactor to humanity. It is one of those things that are "wanted" and likely to be so. God has provided a rein ; it is Christian charity,which bids us love our neighbours as ourselves. We cannot correct others, but we can fight against our own faults ; if all the Children of Mary undertook a crusade against scandal and uncharitable conversations, much might be done in their immediate circles. A good rule is not to speak of our neighbour at all unless we can say some good about him ; and if it be a duty to reveal the fault of another, speak of it only to the right person and choose the best time. This is such a simple rule, but it would go far towards making us saints if we were faithful in practising it. Sometimes a Child of Mary at the beginning of Lent or of the month of May asks herself what act of mortification she can perform. This is an excellent practice, and one which the Master will bless, for it is His precept, "Love one another as I have loved you." Try to practise it in earnest and you will see how difficult it is, especially when you have been annoyed by your neighbour.

Have you ever seen a phonograph? It is most interesting to sit near the instrument and listen to the sounds that it gives forth, You hear a voice, only a voice ; there is something uncanny about it, especially when the person who uttered these words has passed hence, for the very intonations of the voice are reproduced. You wind up the instru-

ment, adjust the small cylinder, the stylus goes to work, touches the flexible membrane of the resonant vessel and then whole discourses are pronounced which can be repeated at will. If all our words were to be registered by one of these instruments, how ashamed we should be of certain past conversations; how careful it would make us in the future. Yet we forget that they are registered in the memory of God, since for every idle word men speak they shall give an account.

This makes us very seriously ask ourselves how we offend in word. None but the perfect are guiltless in this respect, St. James tells us, and as we are not perfect we certainly offend with our tongue in some way. Is it by monopolising the conversation, indiscretion, boasting, murmuring, criticising, contesting, equivocating, exaggerating, ridiculing, having the last word, contending over straws, censuring others' conduct, flattering, exciting others to rebellion, detraction, calumny, answering snappishly? Here is a long list for self-examination. Choose the one which it costs you the most to conquer, make a practical resolution and try to keep it with God's grace. It is good to notice when and where we wound charity, for this will point out the means of remedying the evil. For example, if you find that when you are alone with one particular friend you commit sins of the tongue, evidently you must avoid the person who leads you into sin.

Let us suppose that you have found out your fault, and have made a good act of contrition for the past, you are determined that the tongue, con-

secrated so often by the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, shall not be used to wound your neighbour. Here are a few practical rules to follow as regards conversation ; they are very simple :—

First, speak of things rather than of people, the topics of the day, politics, inventions, discoveries ; all afford interesting subjects of conversation and an intellectual girl who can converse on these is preserved from many temptations against charity. As a rule men are more charitable than women ; it is the smaller insect that stings, so the weaker sex seem to have recourse to this method of wounding their fellows. Why do men sin less in this matter? Is it not because they think more deeply and thus easily find subjects of conversation?

Secondly, we should listen willingly, especially to our elders. This is an act of humility as well as a means of acquiring instruction.

Thirdly, we must resolve to keep silence when the conversation turns on a subject which displeases us and we are powerless to stop it. This is the case when superiors commit sins of the tongue in our presence. We ought to prevent our equals from so doing, or at least go away ; from certain sinful conversations, flight is the only remedy. If our inferiors commit such sins we can stop them at once.

Fourthly, make it a rule to defend the absent and the weak. Other rules might be given, but these are sufficient for general conversation. Each person must take special resolutions against the

defects she has found in herself. A general purpose to avoid all faults is absolutely useless, it is not worth the paper on which it is written. If a resolution is to bear fruit it must be definite and practical Houses rise brick by brick, so the spiritual edifice rises by careful attention to little details. There is no other path to holiness: one by one we must conquer our faults, one by one we must acquire virtues. Prayer, practical resolutions and constant effort will make saints of us sooner or later.

ON CHARITY IN THOUGHT

CHARITY has been called the Queen of Virtues, and St. Paul tells us: "Now there remain faith hope, and charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity." These three virtues are implanted in our soul by Baptism, and when we come to the use of reason, we are bound to exercise them. We must perfect them through life by constant practice, since our salvation depends on whether we possess these virtues or not, or as we commonly say, on our being in a state of grace which presupposes the possession of these virtues. These three virtues are not of equal duration. Faith will accompany us only to the threshold of the next world ; hope will still abide with us until we have expiated our offences in purgatory ; but when we enter Heaven and possess all and more than all we hoped for, then we can no longer practise this virtue.

But how long will charity last? St. Paul tells us, "Charity never falleth away." Throughout eternity our love of God will endure and only in Heaven will that love be perfect. We must love God with all our heart, soul and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. God, Who is all perfection, all holiness, all beauty, merits our love, even had He never done anything for us. He is infinitely

good in Himself. As we love what is good and beautiful, even though it be not ours, so God would have a claim on our hearts were He not our Creator, But God has loved us infinitely. He has showered His blessings upon us. We are created to His image. His Providence provides for our daily wants, and what has He not done for our soul? He has given His Son to die for us. Jesus shed His life-blood in proof of His love for us, and what does God expect in return? Nought but love will satisfy Him. Whoever loves God will do His will. We must prove our love to God by our lives. How can this be done? God, in His infinite greatness, has no need of our gifts, nor can we offer Him anything that is not His already. Yet because our Heavenly Father knows that the joy of a loving heart is to give, He has provided an object on which we can shower our love for His sake.

Our neighbours are, like ourselves, created to God's image and we discharge our debt to God by rendering them service for *His sake;* notice the words "for His sake." All men are not lovable in themselves, for they have their faults; yet inasmuch as they are God's children, they never forfeit their claim to our love. Often alas, by sin, they defile the image of God in their soul; but just as we owe respect to a crucifix, even though it be covered with mud, because it has not ceased to be an image of Christ, so we must respect God's image imprinted in our neighbour's soul. This image is sadly disfigured by sin; but it exists and may, one day, shine out brightly. St. Mary Magdalen is an example

of this. She had obscured the image of God in her soul: but after her repentance, how brightly that image shone forth. Like St. Paul, she could have said then: "I live; now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Have you never felt in your life that you would fain show your love of God? Have you never felt the need of giving God some proof of your love? For example, you had committed some sin which lay like a heavy weight on your soul. You were ashamed to confess it and perhaps stayed away from confession. At last the burden became intolerable and you went and confessed it. The words of absolution brought peace to your soul, and as you went away comforted and rejoicing, was there not this feeling in your heart; "How can I thank God for all His mercies?" The answer came clearly, "I will turn over a new leaf," this meant that you were resolved to serve God better and do your duty to your neighbour for His sake.

The love of our neighbour not only glorifies God and discharges our debt to Him, but it profits our neighbour and gives edification. The world with its keen sight knows how to judge; deeds convince where words fall unheeded. Jesus began "to do and to teach," and He is our Divine Model. He tells us that a cup of cold water shall in no-wise lose its reward. In the description of the last judgment we see the importance Christ attaches to works of charity. He represents Himself as receiving the soul that has practised charity, and points out that He considers it as done unto Him,

while neglect of deeds of charity is followed by the awful words, "Depart, ye cursed." If higher motives fail, even our own interests would urge us to be charitable, since God rewards it so richly hereafter.

How many objects of charity we meet in daily life. Passing over, for a moment, the claims of humanity in general, we come to our proximate neighbour, our parents and relations. Living or dead, they are objects of our charity. Few children find a difficulty in loving their parents, yet they too often forget to pray for a father or mother whom God has called hence. In a family there is often a feud between brother and brother; one branch of the family is, as it were, broken off from the trunk. No effort is made to bring about a reconciliation; yet, surely, if we are to pray for and love all our enemies, those of our kin have the first claim. The aged also have a right to our charity, yet so often this duty is disregarded. The poor and the afflicted are pre-eminently objects of our charity—not merely that charity which gives an alms, but of that charity which devotes itself to comforting them in their sorrow. Our enemies also claim a share in our prayers. We are taught this from childhood; long before we understood the meaning, we used the words divinely uttered, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." What a difficult duty this is to perform. Now let us come to details and see how a Child of Mary can practise charity. The first stage is to watch over our thoughts. We may say it is the most important,

for the unkind thought ever precedes the unkind word or deed. We are apt to call our friends and acquaintances, one by one, before the tribunal of our judgment. We discuss their conduct in our own mind, supply bad motives, and without hearing any evidence on the opposite side, condemn them interiorly. What right have we to judge, when the Creator has said, "Judgment is mine"? How can we judge when we ourselves are so imperfect, and often so prejudiced against the one we judge. If you are in the habit of judging your neighbour's conduct, take this little motto, "Judge not," for your watchword. Each time you find yourself meditating critically on your neighbour's conduct, think of your watchword. Ask your good angel to whisper it gently and, when he does so, be faithful to his inspiration and turn your thoughts into another channel. Think of our Saviour's words: "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged again." Do you fear death and the scrutiny your life must undergo? Does the thought of standing before God's judgment-seat pursue you? Be kind in your judgments and the same measure shall be meted out to you. But you will say "I cannot call black white; my neighbour has done wrong, the thing is self-evident." Certainly you cannot whitewash the deed, but you can excuse the intention; frequently things appear evil when they are not. Any one who saw Joseph fleeing from the palace of Putiphar would have believed the accusation against him. So often, in life, a good deed may look suspicious. Have we never found that our judgments were

erroneous? Yes, over and over again, then surely it is prudent to :—

> Still believe that story false
> That ought not to be true.

Suppose an evident sin to have been committed, even then we can palliate the guilt of the person in our own mind. We do not know how strong the temptation was, nor what we should have done under similar circumstances. Often God lets us fall into the very sins with which we reproach others. It is related in the life of a holy Jesuit that when he was a novice he was very rigid in his censures; his very desire of perfection made him exacting for others. With a view to avoid certain faults he saw in his brethren he took note of them, adding these words, "I will never do that which displeases me in another." Age softened the rigid judgments of his early life. After his death the list of imperfections which he had noticed in others was found. A long list of defects it was that he proposed to avoid and, at the end of it, some forty years later, he had written in a trembling hand these words: "I have committed every one of the faults and many more." What a touching proof of his humility! The young are ever prone to be too rigid in their censures. Age and experience softens this rigidity. We are accustomed to measure others by ourselves and to approve or condemn an action accordingly as we should or should not have done it. This is as absurd as it would be to condemn all who are taller or shorter than we are. Our height is not an absolute

standard by which to measure others. To attempt to do so is not only folly, but may be even cruel. It is imitating the cruelty of the mythical tyrant Procrustes, who fitted all his victims to the same bed. If they were too long for the bed, he cut off their feet; if they were too short he racked their limbs to stretch them to the desired length. God Himself does not exact the same standard from all, because all have not the same advantages or character. What is difficult for one is easy for another and we must each sanctify ourselves with our own individual character and means. Even in Heaven we shall differ the one from the other, "for star differeth from star in glory" A simple practical resolution as regards charity in thought is never to allow ourselves to meditate on our neighbour's conduct, except as a subject of edification or as a means of doing good. Here the old proverb applies, "Comparisons are odious."

ON CHARITY IN WORD.

FROM thoughts we naturally pass on to words. One means of fulfilling the precept of charity, is by kind words. What a power they have

> Kind words can never die;
> Cherished and blest,
> God knows how deep they lie
> Stored in the breast.

A kind word costs little, yet often we give it so grudgingly. When a friend is in sorrow how a kind word goes home to the heart. She has been ill and you send a kind message; perhaps there had been a little coolness between you, but it vanishes through the influence of a kind word, like ice before the sun's rays. Often a kind word has saved a soul on the threshold of crime. A poor man, who had lost his wife and three children within one short year, resolved to commit suicide. Christmas Eve came round; all looked bright out of doors. It was a beautiful, starlit, frosty night. The shops were gaily decorated, and all around seemed gay and happy. The poor man was roaming about, thinking of the last Christmas Eve, when he, with his wife and children, was buying the Christmas dinner and the toys for the children's Christmas-tree. As he looked at the merry faces as they passed him, the desperate thought came: What is life worth? He turned and rushed

onwards towards the river, determined to do away with himself. As he hurried along a kindly greeting fell on his ear: "Good evening; a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you." The speaker was a mere child, but the words brought a solemn thought. "A merry Christmas," "A happy New Year!" What joy or happiness could ever be his if he committed suicide? He thought of his dead wife, of his little ones in Heaven. How could he ever hope to see them again if he persevered in his resolution. God's grace worked in his soul, but the wedge that prepared the way for it was a kind word. It is so true that

> Many a shaft at random sent
> Finds mark the archer little meant;
> And many a word at random spoken
> May hurt or heal a heart nigh broken.

How often, instead of kind words, we hint our suspicions against our neighbour and thus do more harm than by bringing a positive accusation against the person. We hear people say, "I should not like to tell all I know about So-and-so." Immediately our brain is actively at work trying to find out what there can be against him. We examine his conduct in our minds, and either jump at a conclusion, often false, or question the speaker to know more. Curiosity is at the root of many of our sins of word. Sometimes after beginning by speaking well of our neighbours we end by saying something uncharitable. Such and such a girl is so fascinating, she is so clever. We are really very fond of her, but—and here comes in the un-

kind word. Self-love prompts us to speak against our neighbour, for to accuse our neighbour of certain faults is a delicate way of showing that we are exempt from these defects.

A good rule to follow as regards our words is never to speak of our neighbour's faults unless it is a duty. Even then we must take certain precautions and be careful to speak of them with a pure desire to do good. When it is clearly right for us to speak of our neighbour's sins, we must not shrink from the obligation; or make the excuse "It is not my business—I shall only make things unpleasant for myself." These are motives unworthy of a Christian and of a Child of Mary. If a companion, or a brother or sister, or servant is doing wrong and we can stop it by telling the right person it is a positive duty to do so, otherwise we share in the sin by silence. We must take care to speak of it at the right time before it is too late. How much mischief might often have been prevented if parents had known things a little sooner. If you meet with such a case speak kindly to the person who is doing wrong, try to persuade her to stop in her wild course and, if your observations are unheeded, do your duty bravely without thinking of what may happen to yourself in consequence. God will protect you if you act purely for Him. In speaking of the fault, special care must be taken to keep to *facts*. Say what you know and not what you merely suspect, and keep calm yourself. We know by experience how angry people get when accused of more than they are guilty. For example: a boy has com-

mitted a fault six times, he is accused of having done it seven times. His anger, at being accused of more than he has done, will often prevent him regretting his positive faults. Keep *under* rather than over the mark. It is always safer, the more so that things are apt to look blacker than they really are.

Now I suppose that you are fully convinced as to the necessity of watching over your words, and of curbing that "world of iniquity," the tongue; but can you make others respect their neighbour's character? In a measure you can for if there were no listeners there would be no detractors. Suppose you refuse to listen, you will prevent them from injuring their neighbour. This can be done without giving offence. Change the subject of conversation adroitly. This is charging the enemy by a flank movement, as it were; at least make it your rule to stand up for the absent. An old man who was remarkable for his charity was asked how he acquired the habit of never speaking against his neighbour. He replied "When I was a lad I was one day slandering one of my companions. When I had finished my long string of accusations I suddenly discovered, to my confusion, that his father was just behind me and had heard every word. In fear of what he might do or say to me I ran away as fast as my legs would carry me. I never forgot this and when in after life the temptation came to speak uncharitably of my neighbour the thought always came—perhaps his father is at hand." This lesson might be useful to others, for is it not true that we never speak against our neighbour

except in His Heavenly Father's hearing? It is a solemn thought and may serve as a salutary check.

There is another form of unkind words, all the more dangerous because it seems harmless. Flattering words do an immense deal of harm. They sink in the heart of the listener, who is often foolish enough to believe them. Pride thrives on such food, and if a girl is one of those who "have no character at all," as Pope puts it, she will be led on to all kinds of foolish things. "The cup of flattery, if it does not, like that of Circe, reduce men to the level of beasts, is sure, if eagerly drained to bring the best and ablest down to that of fools," (Scott). Have you never seen a person ironically applauded come forward in good faith to repeat a mediocre performance? Distrust a flatterer, they have their own ends; flattering words credited has been the starting-point of many a downward career A true friend never flatters, for flattery is incompatible with real affection.

What a harvest of merit we can reap by paying attention to our words. St. James tells us that not to offend in words is a sign of perfection. This is a virtue which can be practised by all, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; and that Child of Mary is rich indeed and truly wise, who offends not in word. If we feel that we frequently offend God in this respect—and who does not?—we must watch over ourselves carefully, and since we can do nothing without God's help, ask Him, in the words of the Psalmist: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth." Invoke also our Blessed Lady, who knew what to keep "in her heart"

ON CHARITY IN DEED.

CHARITY in thought and word formed the subject of the previous instruction ; now it is time to speak of deeds. How countless are the good deeds we can perform on our journey through life ; there is not a day that does not furnish us occasions of showing love to our neighbour for God's sake. We will enumerate a few that come within the reach of most people. One broad line of conduct is to be serviceable, *to put ourselves out* to serve others without waiting to be asked. Suppose a person falls ill ; this always brings extra work, which has to be done, and at the same time, she must be nursed. Now, if each member of the family lends a helping hand, the work can be accomplished , but if it all falls to the share of one it is very hard. You may say, "I cannot nurse a sick person." The first answer to this is you should learn, for every woman ought to know how to help the sick. "But it is a serious case which requires experience," Then, of course, the sick-room is not the place for a young girl. Still you can take your share. There is much in the house that you can do, you can also go shopping and help with the mending. It does not require mature age or great experience to darn stockings : it requires only good will, a little practice, needles,

and wool. If an interesting book comes as a temptation to prevent you darning them, put it at the bottom of the basket and read it when you have plodded your way through the stockings.

It is a kind deed to refrain from making a noise when a brother or sister is not well. How often people give real pain to one they love, simply by their thoughtlessness. Again, there are some occupations that are disliked by the majority. Who likes dusting or unpicking, stoning raisins or making buttonholes? Very few; yet these things must be done by somebody. Offer your services and you will reap a golden harvest of charity and self-denial. Perhaps you do not like them either, but habit comes to our aid and we soon get used to them.

We can practise charity by leaving the best for others. We so instinctively seek out the best for ourselves. If we have to sweep we naturally take the best brush; if we are to play croquet we pick out the best mallet. To choose the best place, the best room, in short, the best of everything for ourselves, seems like a second nature. Yet it is a selfish practice, for others must then take the worst. Notice how often you do this merely because you do not think. This self-same egotism, clinging to us, causes us to take an interest exclusively in our own affairs. The joys and sorrows of others do not touch us unless we are in any way affected by them. St. Paul tells us to "Rejoice with them that rejoice: weep with them that weep." Suppose that you have some worry: it fills you with anxiety and saps all

the pleasure of life. If you meet with a sympathising friend, how it lightens the burden; Now it is the same for others; they need to pour out the story of their sorrows, and by so doing are comforted. You may say, "I am not old enough to give them advice." They do not always need counsel, often God alone can remove their cross; but they do need a patient listener. The aged especially are apt to come over and over again with the same story. Instead of showing that it wearies you, take an interest in their sorrows, let them pour out the story of their woe; even though you do not say a single word they will go away contented and relieved. When you meet them again show that you have not forgotten their trouble. In this way you may even win souls to God. He has given you time, talents, perhaps wealth and influence. These are entrusted to you, and are to be used for the benefit of your neighbour. A saint has said that the rich are the prey of the poor. Time can be given to the poor by visiting them and working for them; but when you visit do not be condescending in your manner, as though conscious of your dignity. Talents can be imparted to those around us or used for their benefit. Do not fear others excelling you: if they do, it will help to keep you humble, and the very fear of being excelled shows that you need humility.

Wealth is another gift of God. You may not have large sums to dispose of, but you can make a sacrifice for God's poor out of your pocket-money. What a deal of money is wasted on

artificial wants. How much money some girls spend on sweets and pastry, scents and so-called toilet requisites, to say nothing of the extravagant sums wasted on dress. How this money would benefit the poor if judiciously given in alms. Even in pagan Rome, when the country was in a bad state and the poor were starving, sumptuary laws were passed to repress the extravagance of the women as regards dress and jewellery. Christians cannot do less when they remember that to clothe the poor is to minister to Jesus. Perhaps, by speaking to your parents or relations, you may help a person on in the world. Give your influence without grudging your time and trouble. If the service be rendered to one who has annoyed you, then the act of charity will be doubly pleasing to God.

In society, how many acts of politeness may become real acts of charity if done for the Divine Master. An unwelcome visitor calls: you were just enjoying a nice book, having a pleasant chat with a friend, or looking forward to a quiet afternoon. You must look cheerful whatever you feel. Why not profit to turn "an honest penny" for the next world? The visitor stays on, still you keep a pleasant countenance, sacrificing your inclination for God's sake; and the longer the visitor stays the more merit you acquire. What an interminable dull thing a long dinner party seems. How you long to be alone and doing something. Yet you must sit there if your position exacts it; there is fresh fuel for sacrifice. You are invited to a party; the evening arrives, you are tired and have a headache.

How willingly you would remain at home. But duty calls and at the same time furnishes you with ample occasions for mortification. Suppose you cordially detest draughts, or that intellectual game of fishponds—yet you are asked to play, you cannot well refuse—accept cheerfully, and you may gain more merit than by spending an hour in prayer. If anything unpleasant happens in society you pretend not to notice. If our corns are trodden on at home we call out, and express our sentiments in forcible language. If it happens in society we are all smiles, no matter what we feel. "It is nothing, I did not feel it." If we could only keep some of this insensibility for our home it would be a blessing.

If God has given you a friend do not tyrannise over her Some girls regard their friend as a being created to minister to their wants and support all their sallies of humour. Their friend must not look at any one else, she must not presume to have a will or opinion of her own ; in a word, she must be a tool in their hands. Such girls have made a mistake, it is not a friend they need but a slave. There can be no true friendship without sacrifice on both sides.

One way of not wounding the feelings of others is to accept their services even when we could do a thing better ourselves. You go out for a walk ; when you come in you find that your younger sister, to give you pleasure, has dusted your room for you and arranged your things. You do not like your "den," as you call it, to be touched. Instead of helping she has perhaps

hindered you by putting your things where you cannot find them. Yet the service was rendered with a good will; do not get angry and grumble. Grumbling takes time, especially when a woman indulges in that luxury; employ that time rather in putting your things in order and show your pleasure at the good intention if you cannot for the deed. You lay the table neatly and have a particular talent for arranging the flowers. Your sister does not do it so well, but she likes to try; let her have a chance of learning and show her what to do. In a word, put up with a thing less well done than you could do it rather than hurt the feelings of the person who does it with a good intention.

The servants should be the object of your charity. How much trouble we could spare them by being more thoughtful, by not ringing for them without necessity; when they come think of *all* you require so as not to give unnecessary work; help them when they are ill or pressed for time.

Take another example of charity. How cruel it is in a family or workroom to see a league formed against one who is less well endowed mentally than the generality of mankind. In consequence this poor creature is the object of unkind jests; there is no consideration for her feelings, all the disagreeable tasks are for her, and her life is robbed of all its joy. If we only make use of the intelligence which God has given us to torture one who is, as we imagine, inferior to us, we had better be without it. It is such cowardice and cruelty to mock at the weak. Even the schoolboy code of honour

is, "Hit one your own size." If the victim of our *witless* sarcasm be a sister or brother, how much greater is the sin. Because your sister is, as you say, "so stupid," are you justified in playing countless tricks on her? Has she not all the greater claim on your love and sympathy? Stand up for the weak, be their champion; you will gain their love, and, above all, please our Divine Lord. At the same time you enrich yourself, for you win love; and "The wealth of a man is the number of things which he loves and blesses, which he is loved and blessed by." (Carlyle).

Often in a family a brother or sister is on the point of getting into trouble. Ward off the punishment if you can, speak in their favour, find excuses rather than accusations. Put away something that has been left lying about, for example. You see a book, which your sister has evidently forgotten, lying on a bench in the garden. Bring it in, in case a shower of rain comes on. Should this happen the volume will be spoilt, and will have to be made good. Never let the unkind expression, "It serves her right," pass your lips. Our dear Lady would not recognise the voice of her child when speaking thus.

All these little acts are great in God's sight, and help us to be watchful over ourselves. They are all contained in the golden rule, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." How, from all parts, Klondike attracted men who rushed off in the hope of getting money, braving dangers, fatigue and privations in the hope of making a speedy fortune. When it is a question of gaining gold no trouble

seems too great. We may learn a lesson from them: if men work so hard for the "meat which perisheth," what ought we not to do for the reward which is eternal? If a man could pick up as much gold as he pleased, when would he say "It is enough?" We can amass a spiritual fortune by these simple acts of charity. Numerous opportunities present themselves daily; and as we can conquer self and give our loving services, the sharp corners of our characters are worn off and we acquire sanctity.

What marvellous examples the Saints have given us of charity. Look at Father Damien devoting life itself to his beloved lepers, content to see his limbs rotting away if only he might win souls to Christ. What heroism in this martyr of charity! The world, which laughs at devotion and sneers at Catholicism, respects works of charity. See how the Little Sisters of the Poor are respected, even by those who are not of our Faith. Have you ever visited one of their convents? All the infirmities of old age are gathered there; with a devotedness of which many a daughter is incapable the Little Sisters tend their aged poor night and day, putting up with their humours and fancies; and that they may have food for them, go begging in all weathers from door to door. Other communities devote themselves to outcast children, or give their care to the sick and mentally afflicted, while hundreds more are devoting themselves to education.

What a difference Christianity has made in the world, by its sublime doctrine of charity since our

Saviour began "to do and to teach." Every Child of Mary must try to excel in charity, that glorious virtue which includes and shall outlive all others and will ensure us our own salvation. God can give without impoverishing Himself; and when we practice charity, can we not do the same? Not only we lose nothing, but we gain merit for all eternity, and our charity increases as we practise it. We must give generously, and the Master, to Whom and for Whom we give, will not be ungrateful.

Has the thought ever struck you that in Heaven we shall not be able to show our love by self-sacrifice? There will be no need of forbearance. Eternally we shall receive from God, and our reward will be proportioned to our degree of holiness. Give, then generously; give without counting the sacrifices, and when you have a chance of making an act of charity known only to our Lord, seize the opportunity. There is less danger of self-love or of the devil robbing us of merit, when :—

Nobody knows but Jesus;
Is it not better so?
That only He, my dearest Lord,
Should be the One to know.

ON WORK.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return." These are solemn words addressed to sinful humanity by the Creator. They lay down the universal law of labour for all, not as it was before the fall, a pure pleasure, but a heavy penance. This law is for rich and poor alike, all must work in some way or other. In the New Testament the same command is repeated. Christians are not exempt from it. "Six days there are wherein you ought to work," comes as a distant echo of the older precept, "Six days shalt thou labour." The Apostle St. Paul tells his disciples: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat"; and again he emphasises this law: "Work with your own hands." The precept then of work is clearly laid down throughout Holy Scripture. See how nature is ever toiling. Look at the plants; silently the rootlets are extracting from the earth the necessary nourishment. The leaves, too, are working; profiting by the sun's rays they are manufacturing colouring matter and their cells are enlarging. Then comes the bud; it expands into a flower, the seed follows, and life is thus passed on, stored up in the countless germs which the plant produces.

Examine a drop of water under a powerful microscope. What a little world of toilers is presented to our view. Here bacilli, proto-cocci, amœbæ, and countless micro-organisms are ever working—feeding, budding, dividing. Look at that springing monad leaping about incessantly in search of food. Notice the amœba how it changes its form as it ingests its prey. Watch the ceaseless vibrations of the flagella, and the cilia of the "lady's slippers," as they are commonly called. All is activity ; even in the lowest forms of life work is being done. In our frame, what labour is being accomplished. The heart beats on steadily, the blood circulates unceasingly. The wasted tissues are being repaired. Thousands of reflex movements are going on in different parts of the body: all is activity and, when this activity ceases, death ensues.

Look out above this world passing beyond the restless ocean and the tremulous air. See how the planets move on in their majestic beauty, each revolving in its orbit, each accomplishing the Creator's will. All around inculates the precept of work. Nay, in Heaven itself the Saints are working. They are ever singing God's praises. They are before the throne of God and "they serve Him day and night." How these Saints laboured and toiled on earth ! Look at the lives of the Apostles. In their toiling they did but imitate the example set by our Divine Lord, the Carpenter of Nazareth. See Our Lord sitting on the well at Samaria. He is weary and footsore with his journey. Often He had not time "so much

as to eat," and His nights were frequently spent in prayer when rest seemed to be a necessity. The law of labour is universal ; and since "the servant is not greater than his master" we must take our share.

Labour, like all of God's laws, is beneficial. Can you imagine what suffering forced inactivity would cause us. Try, for a moment, to imagine yourself unable to move hand or foot ; now suppose this state of helplessness prolonged for days, weeks, months and even years. What a torture it would be ! Yet your brain still works, your tongue is free, your eyes can see and move. How you shrink from the thought of such a life and what heroic courage it requires to accept this inactivity when God wills it. Labour is beneficial because it preserves us from dangers. We are inclined to indulge in day-dreams, to give reins to our imagination ; but we are engaged in business and ceaselessly our mind is occupied with the work of the moment. As often as we begin to dream so often business claims our attention. We must "be up and doing," and thanks to this constant discipline we lose the bad habit of indulging our imaginations and we become practical.

What a resource work is in sorrow !

> Nature hath assigned
> Two sovereign remedies for human grief :
> Religion, surest, firmest, first, and best,
> Strength to the weak and to the wounded balm ;
> And *strenuous action* next.

God has visited a family with a deep affliction ; the father has been called hence and now labour

is a necessity for all. There is no time to sit and grieve. Work calls imperatively; and work, like time, gradually heals wounds. Has any great sorrow fallen on you, my child? Are you still passing your days buried in your grief? The best remedy is to work. You may say, "I have no need to work, my wants are all supplied." Then work for others; devote yourself to the poor. A fearful crime horrified the world when the good and devoted Empress of Austria fell, struck by the hand of a cowardly assassin. Who can picture the grief of the Emperor when the news was broken to him? "Is no trial to be spared me?" he asked; and well he might, for sorrow had been his lot through life. How did he meet it? He took courage and worked with all his might; not one Minister was refused admittance, and he transacted business as though nothing had happened, so that his people might know they were not to give him time to indulge in grief. When heavy trial falls on a man and he has not the courage to fly to work as an antidote, how frequently it happens that reason ceases to be mistress.

Not only in sorrow does labour sweeten life; but there is a real pleasure in working when the work is in accordance with our tastes. What pleasure a man finds in eating the bread he has earned! Do you remember the first week's wages you received? What did you do with it? If you spent it on some article of clothing, how proud you were to feel that you had earned that money yourself. An example given by the Empress of Austria illustrates this. It is related that once, when travelling *in-*

cognito, as she and her suite passed through a small village they came upon a bridal party. The peasants were dancing, but they had no music, for there was no one to play. The Empress asked one of the ladies who was in attendance to give her an instrument that she was in the habit of using. It was brought to her; she played for their amusement, and the dance went on merrily. When the Empress was leaving, the newly-married couple came forward to thank her, and the wife slipped a small silver coin into her hand. The Empress valued that coin, she would show it to her friends as the only one she had ever earned; after her death it was found among her treasures, and it will pass down to posterity as a coin earned by an Empress.

Do you remember how Jesus, after His resurrection, prepared a meal on the seashore for His Apostles? They had just caught a miraculous draught of fishes and when they landed, Jesus said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Had not the Master prepared sufficient for them all? Yes, but He knows that man loves to eat the fruit of his labours, and He gave the Apostles that pleasure. Do not be ashamed of work; do not resort to the miserable subterfuges that some girls employ to hide the fact that they have to work for a living or to eke out their income. A girl, who was engaged in an office in the city, was too proud to admit the fact. Yet how could she avoid being seen daily at the station and always at the same hour? Pride had a means which succeeded for a time, but ultimately brought ridicule on the inventor when the ruse was

discovered. Her plan was to go one day by train, another by omnibus or tram. She would even start earlier than was necessary to avoid always leaving home at the same hour. If asked by friends, who took a malicious pleasure in teasing her, why she went to the city daily, her answer was: 'To meet papa," or she had "purchases to make" or "a doctor to consult." Any reason except the true one was given. Before long the girl realised to the full:

> What a tangled web we weave,
> When once we practise to deceive.

What sins that one fault—shame of doing work—led her into. How much more she would have been respected had she admitted honestly, "I go to business."

The fruit of our labour, if done for God, lasts beyond the grave. By our works we shall be judged and our place in Heaven for all eternity, will be proportioned to our labour on earth. But if our labour is to merit an eternal reward, it must fulfil certain conditions. The most important is that we be in a state of grace. Without this we are but heaping up "wood, hay and stubble" for the fire which shall "try every man's work of what sort it is." Christ says "Without Me ye can do nothing." The dead cannot labour, neither can the dead soul lay up treasures in Heaven.

Our work must be appropriate to our condition. All are not called to the same kind of work. Some do brain work, others manual labour. Suppose

that you are at home, not called to earn your own living. In that case learn how to keep house, to cook and to work ; devote some time to study, for example, take up music or a language. Work for the poor and let recreation have the minimum part of your time. Paying and receiving visits is fatiguing ; it sometimes almost amounts to slavery, when hours are thus passed consecutively. If you have to earn your living, then your work is cut out for you, when once you have chosen your path in life. Try to perfect yourself in your profession. If you are a dressmaker, aim at excelling ; not for gain merely, but because we should labour for God and not for a man. If you are engaged in liberal works of any kind, the same principle applies. Do not be a slovenly worker, just doing what is strictly necessary. Put Jesus, Who did "all things well," before you as your model. Perhaps you have not yet chosen your occupation. In that case, be guided by your parents' wishes, your own aptitude and the intrinsic worth of the employment. Avoid taking up one that might injure your health. How many girls will learn dressmaking or millinery because it is more genteel than going to service. They persevere in it for some time, but they are not strong enough to continue and, after having spent a year or more running errands and unpicking, as most apprentices do, they have to give it up because sitting does not agree with them. Having given their labour for nothing and wasted their time, they are then forced to go to service, which is an honourable employment. Our dear Mother Mary hallowed the title for ever when she

called herself "the handmaid of the Lord." The Pope signs himself, as "Servant of the servants of God." Of Jesus it is said that He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."

Constancy is another quality our labour must have. It does not do to work by fits and starts. Many a girl is clever, but cannot get on because she is perpetually changing her employment or merely works when it pleases her. When you wish to engage a servant, ask her how many places she has had and the longest time she remained in any one situation. If the list of her past employers is a long one, do not add your name to it.

Our work must not be guided by caprice. We must do our work "from the heart, as to the Lord and not to man." For example, you are preparing for an examination; now there is an interesting and a dry part in every branch. Take arithmetic: you love it, you are quite excited over a difficult problem and enjoy finding out the answer. You do not want to be told it. But did you ever hear of any one getting intensely interested over the multiplication tables or the tables of weights and measures? Here the hard grinding work comes in. You love history perhaps, but you do not love learning dates equally well. Geography is interesting, but getting off by heart the population or inland revenue is certainly not captivating and affords few students amusement.

Lastly, work must be done in the right time. How many girls will not sacrifice their pleasure. It must come first; yet work is a necessity, for they must live, so they take their amusements and

then ruin their health by sitting up late to make up for lost time.

Would you labour fruitfully? Then observe these few simple rules. Have a fixed time for each duty. Vary your occupations so as not to overstrain the nervous system. Be mistress of yourself; do not work in a feverish manner. The greater the press, the calmer you should try to keep. Imitate an aged Cardinal, who used to say to his servant, "Go slowly, John; we are in a great hurry." A person who is excited and feverish over her work tires herself and others; in the end she does less than one who plods steadily on.

Ask yourself now, Child of Mary, "How do I do my work? Do I sanctify it by offering it to God? Do I shirk disagreeable duties? Do I work by fits and starts? Is my work done thoroughly? Do I work as well when my superiors are absent as when I am under their eyes?" If you find there is room for amendment have the courage to begin at once. Life will be all the brighter and no girl leads a happier life than she, who realises how sweet it is to labour for the Master. Shall we like the labourers in the vineyard, say, "No man hath hired us"? No, this is not true. Every Christian is called to work.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and *to wait.*

"To wait" is, perhaps, after all, the hardest lesson to learn. Those to whom God has given the cross

of ill-health feel this keenly. How willingly would they labour, but God has denied them strength. They see others toiling around them. Is this your case? Take courage; you too can labour—your labour is not the active work of your brothers and sisters, but it is the patient acceptation of your cross. Each morning say to yourself, "I must do *my work*. I must not complain, I must try to be contented since God has willed it"; and by patience you are accomplishing a real work for eternity. Let this beautiful thought of our blind poet console you: "They also *serve* who only *stand and wait*."

ON VOCATION.

PART I.

HAVE you ever thought over the problem of our individuality, how each man, as it were, stands alone? No two human beings are so alike as to resemble each other in every respect, and even where there is a strong physical likeness the characters often differ totally. Each human being can say: "I stand alone in creation, cut off from my fellows by a strongly marked personality. I shall keep it for all eternity. There is no one exactly like me." It is a deep thought that, like so many others, we cannot fathom. How it makes us realise the infinite power of God, Who has created such a variety of characters. Not only have we this strongly marked personality, but our path in life is specially traced out by God. No two human beings are placed in exactly the same position, and if their surroundings are alike at a given moment, the dissimilarity of their characters causes these circumstances to have a different effect on each. This is another solemn truth which also reveals God's wisdom: "Not only I stand alone as regards my personality but I have a special path in life marked out for me by God." Most men drift along on the stream of life into the channel Providence has destined for them; with others it forms the matter

of a deliberate choice. This special path is our vocation. All men have a vocation. What do we mean by this? Simply that God has destined us to fill a given place in the world, it is *our place* and no other can fulfil our obligations for us. This is clear, since each has his own path traced out. A Child of Mary is reading this. She exclaims: "My vocation!" Yes, I have often thought of it. I prayed to know my vocation at my first Communion. What is it?

We will try to give some simple home truths about vocations. Leaving aside what we may call extraordinary paths in life we may say that there are three paths open to a Christian. They are the religious life, celibacy in the world, and marriage. It may be useful to deal with each one in turn, for each has its characteristics and its obligations. We will speak first of the religious life, the path for those whom Jesus calls to leave all to follow Him. He calls whom, when, and whence He pleases. Levi was called at the receipt of custom. The Apostles were called when they were fishing. Once our Lord bid a young man follow Him; but he refused and went sorrowfully away, for he had great riches. Some are drawn to religious life by a burning desire to save souls and to show their love for Jesus. Others are inspired to repair the outrages offered to our Lord by His sinful children; others again seek refuge in a convent because they know their own weakness, they feel what a power the world has over them, so they seek safety in flight. This is not the most common motive, but it exists, and has made many quit the world. In the desert

the wells are generally the resorts of robbers, who know that travellers must stop there to refresh themselves and their camels. Over these wells inscriptions are frequently placed, such as "Drink and be off." This wise counsel has saved many a life. The pleasures of this wold are likewise the resort of those ancient brigands, the triple enemies of mankind. Of these pleasures, some have sufficient moral courage to "drink and be off"; others cannot curb themselves, they must linger there and satiate their appetites. Such weak characters God sometimes calls to the perfect life, that they may assure their salvation.

How can I know if I have a religious vocation? This is a very important question, for not all who think they have a vocation for a religious life or who desire it, are called; while, on the contrary, many who shrink from the very idea are really called by God. Thus, most pious girls have at some time or other imagined they had a religious vocation, and this persuasion has helped to keep them from some of the dangerous temptations of the world; however, the idea of being a nun gradually faded from their mind, they married, became good mothers, and God perhaps called one of their children to follow Him. Others, again, never thought of such a thing as entering a convent. It came upon them like a thunderbolt, perhaps, after some trial, or during a mission or retreat. In some souls the desire of the perfect life grew gradually. They do not know when the thought first came; it seems as though they had always longed to belong wholly to God. The still small

voice that called them grew louder and louder, till at length it was like a mighty rushing wind driving them to the altar of sacrifice. This strong, deep longing is generally accompanied with an intense realisation of the hollowness of the world and its inability to make us happy; the more we are forced to frequent it, the more we hate it. Nowhere do we feel the vanity of human pleasures, as when we are in the midst of them. Is this a description of your feelings, Child of Mary? If so, God is calling you; be faithful and He will open a way, no matter how impossible this may seem. The earnest, steadfast desire of giving oneself to God is a proof of vocation.

But perhaps you will say, "My desire is not so strong, it comes and goes." For weeks it pursues me, then again it goes away. In this case you must pray fervently to know God's will. A girl was once asked by her confessor if she had ever thought of her vocation. She replied: "Yes, Father, I *fear* I am called to the religious life." Is this your feeling? This dread may exist even where there is a true vocation; it merely proves how human nature shrinks from sacrifice. Pray on and ask advice. Our confessor is the right one to consult, for he has grace to guide the souls entrusted to his care. Hence we have four landmarks to guide us: the *strong desire*, a *distaste for worldly pleasures*, *the inspiration to pray* that we may know our vocation, and *the advice of our confessor.*

Is this all? By no means; for the aspirant to religious life must have the necessary qualities and

be free from certain obligations. The last part is so important that all the qualities possible could not counterbalance it. The Child of Mary who thinks of entering religion must have no home ties. If an aged parent or an invalid sister needs her care, evidently she is not called to enter a convent, for the very simple reason that commandments come before counsels. If her health is very weak and needs constant care, especially if there is any organic disease, she is probably not called. Most convents exact a certificate of health from probationers; the Convents of the Visitation are known to make an exception to this rule and there may be other convents where a delicate girl could be received. St Francis of Sales, in his wonderful charity, willed that bad health or deformity should be no obstacle to entering the Congregation of the Visitation. Home ties and bad health are the chief exterior obstacles; the qualities which a candidate for religious life should possess will be discussed in the next chapter.

ON VOCATION.

PART II.

THE necessary qualities, which an aspirant to religious life should possess, are very important and it is by these that a confessor forms his judgment as to a girl's vocation. It is difficult for him to decide sometimes, since in most cases he only knows what the penitent tells him. His experience, however, serves him in good stead ; and then, above all, there is the special light vouchsafed to him by the Holy Ghost.

Cheerfulness heads the list of the required qualities. Look at that Child of Mary. Poor Sophy, is always fretting and moping ; she is unhappy at home, and determined not to stay there when people are so unkind ; she will go and live in a convent, the dear nuns will be so different, they are such angels : dear Sister So-and-so always consoles her so sweetly, what must it be to live with such holy souls. Do you think Sophy has a vocation ? Not a bit of it. A convent is not a plantation of weeping willows ! A fretful, melancholy character will never get on there. The life is hard, there are innumerable sacrifices and next to the grace of God, love of souls, and a strong vocation, a cheerful disposition is the greatest help when the cross presses, whereas fretfulness

increases the weight. For Sophy, forgetfulness of herself, hard work and a little pleasure are necessary to draw her thoughts off herself, and she will soon forget all about her vocation.

Love of mortification comes next ; when a life of self-sacrifice is to be taken up it needs a generous will, and a soul that knows how to make voluntary acts of mortification, in order to be capable of supporting the sacrifices that must be made in religious life. Always to get up early ; to pray for hours daily, no matter how dry we feel ; to obey in all that is not sin, to bear with one another, never to choose our occupation, are daily sacrifices which life in a convent entails and they presuppose a spirit of sacrifice. So if you are thinking of entering a convent, you will feel the necessity of exercising yourself in little daily acts of self-denial, such as early rising, simplicity in dress, willingness to help at home, patiently bearing reproof and submitting to have your plans upset.

These thoughts lead up to a third qualification, which is devotedness. It is the essence of a nun's life. One who thinks of giving her life wholly to God must be able to devote herself, heart and soul, to a good cause. In every Congregation of Children of Mary there are always some devoted members who sustain all the good works, are always ready to give their time and money, to put up with the difficulties arising from the friction of different characters They do not leave the Congregation because this person looked coldly at them or that one sneered. They do not throw up an office because it entails work ; but fulfil a charge in earnest

undertaking the responsibility not for the sake of the honour, but because their heart and soul is in the work. The same spirit will animate a devoted Child of Mary at home; she will always be ready to give up her time and pleasure to please others. A girl with such a character, if called to religious life, will make a fervent nun. She can bear the heat and labour of the day without repining.

One of the vows of religion is obedience and in some convents it is made to include all the others. The Child of Mary who thinks of entering religion should ask herself how she obeys at home; does the very fact of being told to do a thing make her wish to do the contrary? This is not a spirit of obedience. A girl, who will not yield to her superiors in the world, will find it difficult to yield in religion and to obey there all her life. You may feel disposed to object: "When I am in a convent I shall acquire all these virtues." Yes, if you have the germ of them now; not unless. Suppose that a father wishes to bring up his son as a musician. He does not expect the lad to know the notes, scales and rules of harmony before he has been taught; but he takes him to a master, who will try to discover if the boy has an ear for music, and if he likes it. The germs of the art he is to learn are exacted, because a master can develop these germs, but he cannot create them. So in a soul called to serve God in the cloister there must be the germs of cheerfulness, mortification, self-sacrifice, and obedience.

Nor is this list exhaustive: good temper is essential; some girls are very bright and merry

as long as all goes well, but they take offence at the slightest thing, then a fit of sulkiness follows which may last for hours. Such a girl has an uneven temper; it is not impossible to correct it, but she will have to work hard, and would do well to practise forbearance at home. It is a very great mistake to imagine that in a convent all is plain sailing, that with the secular dress, we strip off all defects. Religious virtues are not infused, they have to be slowly and laboriously acquired. Further, since a nun leads a life of prayer, an aspirant should be pious and, like St. Mary Magdalen, find her happiness at the feet of our Divine Lord.

These general requirements should not discourage an earnest Child of Mary, who thinks she has a vocation. If you have the germ of these virtues, God's grace, religious training and your own goodwill will do marvels. So take courage and begin your noviceship in the world. There are plenty of occasions, and your faithfulness in profiting by these may be the means of obtaining the grace you desire.

There is, however, one more very important question to settle. A girl may say, "I feel sure that God is calling me; but I do not know where." There are two great classes of religious vocation, the active and the contemplative. For the latter the aspirant needs a strong love of prayer and mortification, and an earnest desire to repair the insults offered to Our Lord by sinners. The vocation of the Carmelite or Poor Clare is apostolic; but they win souls by prayer and penance, not by

direct action. Other contemplatives devote themselves entirely to singing God's praises and working for His altars. This is the spirit of the Benedictines. The different congregations of cloistered nuns, who practise perpetual adoration, are animated by a burning desire to atone for the irreverences offered to Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. An aspirant for a cloistered order must have the germs of the spirit which distinguishes the religious family she desires to join.

Vocations for the active orders, however, are more numerous, and here a girl must consult her inclinations and capabilities. Does this astonish you; did you imagine that all inclinations must be sacrificed? Certainly not. As a general rule, God builds up the spiritual edifice on the foundation of those natural gifts He has bestowed, for He is the author of both. Thus one girl has both a taste and talent for nursing the sick; another loves children and can teach well; a third would prefer to devote herself to the aged and infirm. Surely these talents and tastes are not given in vain; like sign-posts they point out the right path. Very often God gives a secret inspiration which reveals His will. A girl thinks of going to some convent, her choice is not quite made. In the meantine she visits some other convent and a conviction forces itself upon her—"This is where God is calling me"; the thought persists, she cannot get rid of it. It is very likely God's will that she should enter the second convent, especially if the idea of going there gives her a feeling of rest and happiness previously inexperienced. This does not mean that a

girl is to be sentimental and think she is called to enter any convent she visits; for if it happened more than once, God could not be the author, it would be her imagination playing her tricks. The choice of a convent is a very important matter. It is the vocation within the vocation, for in calling us to follow Him, Jesus guides our steps to the special path in which He wills us to walk.

The foreign missions and direct contact with souls attract many; yet all are not fitted for these works, and it is very difficult for some to understand that *all* in a convent contribute to the good works done. They imagine, for instance, that only those who teach or nurse are doing God's work; whereas all co-operate, just as in a watch, all the parts of the machinery are necessary, though only the hands mark the time. So those who are engaged in exterior works of mercy are helped by those who perform the domestic offices in the house; and all merit in proportion as their intentions are pure.

If you think you are called to religious life it is a good plan to write down your reasons, see *why* you wish to enter a convent, *when* the desire comes most strongly, and *what effect* this desire produces on you. If you wish to consecrate yourself to God you must know why. Is it simply because you do not get on with your mother or sisters? Is it because in a convent you think you will have an easy life and will not have to earn your living? If so your vocation is very doubtful. When do you wish to be a nun? When you have been crossed or disappointed, whereas

you forget all about it in the midst of worldly festivities? Such a vocation is more than suspicious. What effect does this desire produce in you? Does it make you more cheerful to correct yourself, more assiduous in frequenting the Sacraments, more disposed to sacrifice your own inclinations? These are signs that your vocation is real. Does your desire lead you to consult priest after priest; to visit one convent after another and to make yourself interesting? It is highly probable you will never enter any, if such is the case. Fickleness and religious life never go hand in hand.

A few words more about certain false ideas that often deceive those who are called to religious life. One of the most common is this, "I am not good enough." This is perfectly true; but just as before Holy Communion we say, "Lord, I am not worthy," and then immediately approach the altar, so we can say in all sincerity to our dear Lord, "I am not worthy"; while we go forward and join the ranks of those who shall follow the Lamb for all eternity. We go not because we are worthy but because the Master bids us. He can and will sanctify those He calls: the great work of our life in a convent will be to render ourselves less unworthy. When our Lord chose His twelve Disciples, Holy Scripture says emphatically, "He called to Him *whom He would*"; and so our Lord does now. How often the girls who were always getting into trouble at school for tricks and wild behaviour turn out good nuns, while the model girls remain in the world. Is this astonish-

ing? No, not at all; the wildness, perhaps hid a rich nature, one capable of devotedness and self-sacrifice. There are some who long to be called by Christ; they volunteer to follow Him, but He bids them return to their homes and glorify God there, as of old He refused to allow the man whom He had delivered from the evil spirit to follow Him.

Some believe themselves called, but draw back because, they say, "It is so hard." Certainly it is not easy. Yet if God calls you, He will smooth the path and give you the necessary grace. Is not the joy of belonging wholly to Christ worth the sacrifice? Remember that our Lord has promised as a reward "an hundredfold," even in this world, to those who leave all for His sake and in the world to come life everlasting.

One common illusion that many girls have is to imagine that, if they like some particular convent very much, they may not enter there. Why not? Surely this is no proof. Does not God perhaps point out the path by our very inclinations? It would be quite a different thing if you merely entered for the sake of one nun to whom you were attached. This is too human a motive and would be unworthy of our Lord. But we ought to love the spirit and works of the convent that we intend to join and esteem the religious.

There is one more illusion, generally the last we get rid of; that is to imagine that when we enter a convent we leave all our imperfections at the door. This is a great error. God reveals our defects to us little by little: we could not bear the sight of all

our imperfections at once ; so as we try to correct ourselves, we contantly find other faults which were hitherto unperceived. The Saints rejoiced to find out their defects, because, knowing them they could correct them, with the help of God's grace. If you are touchy, proud or obstinate at home, be sure these defects will show themselves later if you enter a convent and give you plenty of work ; but to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and it is best to prepare for the inevitable. You will not be a saint the moment you enter a convent, nor will you always have great consolation in prayer. Father Milleriot, a holy Jesuit, who was a parish priest before he entered the Society, generally enjoyed great consolation in prayer. He tells us that no sooner had he entered the Society of Jesus than his consolations were cut off as " with a razor. " We start on a path of life-long sacrifice in choosing the perfect life ; but Jesus will be ever near to aid us. Mary, our Mother, will be our model of purity, humility, obedience and charity. There may be many souls whom *we* are destined to bring to God by our prayers and sacrifice ; and if God gives us the grace to enter religious life and to persevere, it will be ours to hear the Master's voice at the hour of death saying : " Come, spouse of Christ, accept the crown prepared for thee."

ON THE SHELF.

The religious vocation formed the subject of the last instruction, but all are not called to practise the counsels of perfection. There are some who are certain that they have not a religious vocation and yet do not feel inclined to get married. They have a father or mother to support, or their own health is weak, or they have a strong love of personal liberty and cannot bring themselves to sacrifice their will. Family ties, mould of character and ill-health are generally the reasons which determine women to enter on the path of single blessedness, though mischievous tongues are not wanting to echo, "Sour grapes." Want of fortune is often the cause of a girl never marrying. These few lines are addressed to those who are "on the shelf," who have no idea of marrying either from choice or necessity. So they are intended for those of a "certain age." This phrase is comprehensive. It includes from the thirties to the sixties. Swift has remarked with justice that "All men hope to live long, but none are willing to be old."

Few women can refuse the temptation of a crown. Henry VIII. executed Anne Boleyn after having divorced Katherine of Arragon, and the next day Jane Seymour was willing to risk her

neck for the pleasure of wearing a crown. Yet few women seem desirous to possess the hoary head which Scripture calls a "crown of glory." A woman is thirty, *plus the rest*, yet she persists in giving her age as twenty-four. Why not go back to "sweet seventeen?" People would believe her just as readily. Those who have this mania deceive none but themselves if they succeed even in doing that. It is related in mythology that a goddess, wishing to reward a mortal for some service he had rendered her, gave him the gift of immortality, but forgot at the same time to give him perpetual youth. Consequently he lived on; withered away gradually until nothing was left of him but a voice, and that was reduced to a mere squeak; then she changed him into a grasshopper and as such he still chirps on. There are some people who seem to envy this mortal and who would doubtless accept immortality on the same conditions. No sensible Child of Mary would be so foolish as to wish to appear much younger than she is.

Speaking of the thirties reminds us of Swift's "Resolutions when I come to be old." He drew them up at the age of thirty-two. They show that human nature is ever the same, since he proposed to avoid some of the faults into which people fall in our days. Here are a few of his resolutions:

"Not to keep always with the young unless they desire it.

"Not to be peevish, morose, or suspicious.

"Not to scorn present ways, or wits, or fashions, or men, or war, etc.

"Not to tell the same story over and over again to the same people.

"Not to be over severe with young people, but to give allowance for their youthful follies and weaknesses.

"Not to be influenced by or give ear to knavish tattling; servants or others.

"Not to be too free of advice, nor trouble any but those who desire it.

"To desire some good friends to inform me which of these resolutions I break or neglect and to reform accordingly.

"Not to talk much, nor of myself.

"Not to boast of my former beauty, strength etc.

"Not to be positive or opiniative.

"Not to set for observing all these rules, for fear I should observe none."

These rules are very sensible and would suit many, especially those of a "certain age" who are "on the shelf." Is it a good or bad thing to be there? All depends on the person. There is no doubt that a life of independence tends to foster faults of character, such as selfishness, sins of the tongue, false piety and absurd manias. A woman who has no husband to consider, no children for whom she must work and suffer, is apt to concentrate all her thoughts on herself, her comforts, and her health. All her money goes for personal satisfactions, there is no thought or care for others; and if the habit grows such a person would merit the epigram written on a selfish man;—

When he lived and when he died,
Nobody laughed and nobody cried;
Where he is and how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody ——

It would not be kind to put the last word, for as Catholics we must pray for all; still it must be confessed that a selfish person can generally say with truth, "I care for nobody, no, not I, and nobody cares for me."

Avarice is another sin which selfish persons commit; it grows upon them as years roll over their heads. Frequently those "on the shelf" are pious, but their piety is not edifying, because their idea of religion is a false one; thus while they receive Holy Communion frequently they do not bridle their tongues and temper, and so give scandal. As Pope expresses it, "They are ever in a passion or a prayer." These are rare cases, but it is well to note them and to take warning from them.

Thank God there is a brighter side. What are the advantages of being an "old maid"? There, the word has slipped out at last! They are numerous. Suppose all the "old maids" to be wafted up to Heaven by a celestial breeze, the world would be all the poorer. How much women, whose time is their own, can do to help in Catholic missions. They can visit the poor, nurse the sick, help in the Sunday schools, seek out and rescue the fallen and do Church needlework. How many thousands are thus spending a useful pious life by devoting themselves to God and His Church. They second the priest, help the convents by

doing outdoor work, and the good they have accomplished in the world will only be known at the Day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. How many good works also they keep up at the cost of pecuniary sacrifices. Now if a Child of Mary feels it her vocation to serve God by working for His glory and the poor, she should shape her life accordingly. Her resolutions should be practical, her time well spent, her piety sensible and solid. One great fault among workers is only to labour as long as they are at the head of a good work. They must lead and will never consent to play "second fiddle." In a band, if every man insisted on only playing solos, where would the band be? It would cease to exist. Any good work undertaken for God gives opportunity for sacrifices. We must come in contact with those, with whom we do not sympathise naturally. If a worker is incapable of supporting the friction of characters and throws up a work the moment a fellow-worker displeases her, she is evidently working for self and not for God, since she abandons all her enterprises when some one has hurt her feelings. She forgets that God's work still waits for her devotedness, in a sense she makes the Master pay for His servants' shortcomings. How much we can suffer for God when working with others! All mean well, all have a desire to do God's will; yet all are not saints and even if they were there would still be some mutual jar of characters. A slow saint would make an active saint suffer some inconvenience. Very often the difficulties arise from

little things misrepresented ; words are repeated in a different *tone* from that in which they were first uttered and this suffices to change the meaning of the whole sentence. One of the most important resolutions of any parish worker should be *never to listen to or spread mischievous gossip.*

Constancy is another quality of a Christian labourer in the vineyard. When a good work is first started, there are always plenty of helpers ; as time goes on they drop off and at last only a few devoted souls remain to carry on the work. It is so in every parish. To do one's best to keep up an association that is flagging requires courage and self-sacrifice. Frequently the inconstancy arises from workers undertaking too much—they have too many irons in the fire, consequently some must get cold. Difficulties often arise simply from the want of tact in workers rather than from actual faults. Indiscretion is a disintegrating agent : just as drops of water which appear so harmless, sink into the mountain, freeze and cleave the solid rocks, so indiscreet people are the means of ruining many good works. A Superior of a monastery once said that the imperfections of his monks gave him far more trouble than their positive faults. Why is this? Because most earnest Catholics will readily admit when they have been guilty of a downright fault whereas they do not always perceive a want of tact or an indiscretion. With a little humility these collisions may be avoided, and our Chistian workers can reap a harvest of merit from the sacrifices their work exacts.

In one of our Catholic churches in England there is a beautiful stained-glass window. It represents the resurrection of Dorcas. It was put up as a tribute to a devoted worker who for fifty years spent her life and fortune for the sick and the poor. There were no schools in the parish, so she gathered the children together and taught them their Catechism, clothed and fed them as far as her means permitted. Every spare moment not devoted to the poor was spent in decorating God's altar and when the days were too short, sleep was sacrificed for Christ's sake. How many nights she watched beside the dying, how many fallen souls has she rescued during the half-century she worked in the mission. Do you despise such an "old maid"? It is a beautiful example and there are many such. Compare this with one who devotes the wealth of her intellect, the treasures of her heart, and the energies of her will to a cat, a lap dog, a parrot and last, *not least*, to herself! "Oh, the heavy change!"

God's work must be done, and those who are free from home ties have a noble mission to fulfil in the world. If you are at liberty to dispose of your time, ask yourself, "What am I doing for God? How am I accomplishing my work? What else can I undertake for the Master?" You may say, "How can I work for God? I am poor and must earn my daily bread; my time is not my own." In this case do what you can. Tend a sick neighbour, economise to be able to give alms, try to lead sinners into the right path. Look at the example of St. Zita: she, too, was a servant;

though the acts of charity she performed were countless, yet she never neglected her work. Her charity made her ingenious; she begged for her poor and was the means of saving them from starvation; and how many souls was she the means of converting! The examples of the saints are for us to imitate and among them we find plenty who chose a life of celibacy in the world that they may be occupied with the Master's work and win souls for Him. Such examples are a living power and as we meditate on them, to those of us who are in the same position in life a still small voice seems to whisper, "Go thou and do likewise."

CHOOSING A PARTNER.

"I HAVE chosen my text with the design, if possible, to disturb some part of this audience of half an hour's sleep, for the convenience and exercise whereof this place, at this season of the day, is very much celebrated." A sermon "On Sleeping in Churches" was thus introduced by Swift whose congregation was addicted to this practice. Certain subjects seem to have a somniferous effect, but "choosing a partner" certainly will not engender sleep among the young and marriageable portion of a congregation. A few "home truths" on engagements and marriage may be useful to those of our Children of Mary who are thinking of settling in life and we may safely prophesy that they will keep awake to read them.

If a girl feels it is her vocation to marry, and that she could make a man happy and take care of a home, then she will need some advice on the matter, since marriage is a serious step for which there is no noviceship as for religious life. A little boy, when asked what he thought Heaven was like, replied, "It is a place where nobody ever says 'Don't.'" Yes, this is true in Heaven, but on earth we must hear the objectionable word "don't"; and as these "home truths" are intended to do good to Mary's children, it has been necessary to use the "don't" pretty frequently: so our girls

will kindly try to be patient if the word comes often in these instructions.

Marriage is the one subject on which most girls have so many illusions. We begin by a few cautions on the subject; if they only do good to one they will not have been penned in vain. Do not consider that you must take the first offer that presents itself. There are plenty of worthless characters who are ready to impose on a girl's credulity: they have succeeded time after time and will succeed so long as there are foolish girls in the world. How many girls catch at a first offer, as a drowning man catches at a straw. Here is a girl who yesterday was "fancy free"; to-day she is deeply in love and the object of her love is all perfection. Such an attachment will not last; it has no solid foundation and doubtless next month she will have transferred her affections to another. Some girls cannot see through flattering speeches; they take them all for genuine coin. When a girl gives herself up in this way to the first comer she often becomes a tool in his hands. If he happen to be a fop, whose one idea is his personal appearance, he is not likely to make a good husband and a serious girl will not marry him. Vanity is bad enough in the weaker sex, but in a man it is doubly despicable.

The most common defect in girls is to flirt; in the street, in society, in church even, they seek to draw the attention of the male sex to themselves. Now a flirt is a heartless creature, who has no respect for the feelings of a good man, with whom she will trifle; and very often she merely tries to

win the love of some one in order to vex a companion, or it may be that she feels flattered by being "the admired of all admirers." She believes all that is told her; no flattery is too absurd for her to swallow down. If she could hear her so-called "admirers'" candid opinion of her she would not feel flattered. A flirt may have plenty of strings to her bow; but she rarely gets a good husband, nor does she deserve one. How much even sensible people will drink down in the way of flattery is astonishing. Look at Queen Bess, how clear-sighted and prudent she could be at the Council table! Now compare her conduct at Court. Here comes a courtier; he approaches the Queen, shading his eyes with his hand that he may not be dazzled by her charms! The Queen smiles and is flattered in spite of sixty summers having passed over her head.

A girl often commits the sad mistake of getting engaged secretly: the condition laid down is that her parents must know nothing; plausible reasons are given. She is not experienced enough to know how much evil this may hide. A man who has honourable intentions does not stoop to such a mean action. Generally, when such strict secrecy is to be kept, there are reasons why the truth cannot be owned, and probably these reasons would be sufficient to cancel the engagement at once if they were known. A weak-minded girl refuses to listen to reason, and many a shipwreck of honour and happiness has resulted from the infatuation. When such a girl has an affection for a person reason seems to abdicate. We may

go further and say that the very proposition of secrecy should make a girl lose her respect for the man, and no marriage can be happy when husband and wife have no esteem for each other. Mutual respect is the only solid base of real affection, which differs from infatuation as gold differs from dross. Sometimes girls argue thus: "I know that the one to whom I am engaged is addicted to such and such a fault; but I have great influence over him, and when we are married he will amend." That depends on the fault. If it be one of character, such as fickleness, extravagance, or intemperance, these faults are with difficulty corrected; only a man with an energetic will has the courage to conquer self. Many girls have married with this idea and have had bitter experience of the contrary.

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure" is a time-honoured proverb; its truth is verified day by day. Here is a girl who is to be married in March; she only met her future husband in January: how can she judge if she is likely to be happy? Here is another. In this case "haste" refers to her age—she is eighteen. This is rather young to marry. She had better get out of her teens before entering on married life. Girls often think nothing of making a promise of marriage which they have not the slightest intention of keeping. Doubtless they do not know that to make such a promise, as also to break a promise of marriage without sufficient reason, is a grievous sin. We often hear the remark: "I am so persecuted by So-and-so's attention." If a Child of Mary has sufficient self-respect

and sense of duty to keep a modest, reserved demeanour, she will not be persecuted with objectionable attentions. Such behaviour secures the esteem even of those, who are willing to flatter vanity in girls of the butterfly species. A flirt is a sad specimen of humanity, who loses the respect of her fellows and is at heart vain and selfish.

When a sensible girl wants to get married she must *choose* her partner; and what is she to look for, what qualities should he have? Evidently the first condition is that he should be a practical Catholic. How can there be real happiness and union when opinions are divided on such a vital question as religion? The husband will mock at all the wife holds sacred. They cannot worship God together, and if He gives them children, how difficult it will be to bring them up with Catholic instincts. Here you put forth an objection. He has promised not to interfere and the children are to be brought up Catholics. You could not do less than exact this, since the Church only permits mixed marriages on these conditions. Still, reflect what example the children will see. The father will eat meat on Friday, he will not go to Mass on Sunday. Again, and here is the most serious side of the question: if God takes the mother how is the father to bring up the children in a faith which is not his, and in which he disbelieves? How often are souls lost to the Church thus!

In our days Protestants see no harm in divorce, while Catholics hold it to be contrary to the law of God; hence a fresh danger arises from mixed

marriages, a woman may find herself deserted by her husband. But the Catholic may argue, "I mean to convert my husband." Your intentions may be good and if he become a sincere Catholic you will indeed have done a good work. But how many men are complaisant enough to go through the ceremony of being received into the Church and after marriage do not practise their religion. If he intends to join the Church, let him do it before the marriage, and practise the Catholic religion for a time, at least, before the marriage takes place.

Another important point is that there should be no great difference in the ages and position in society of those who purpose to go through life together. If one is much older, the difference does not always appear to be very great at first, when, for example, the man is forty and the woman only twenty; but when she is forty he will be sixty, and here the difference is more marked. Again, if the husband is in a higher rank of life, the wife will be ashamed of her relatives; there will always be something to hide; she will feel her ignorance of the etiquette her new position entails; in a word, there will be a constant jar. Education does much to bridge over this chasm. In her choice a girl should be guided by her parents' advice. They have her good at heart, as well as experience and knowledge of the world. The confessor also can help a girl, provided he knows her family and the one whom she thinks of marrying. Many mistakes are made here. Girls get engaged and leave their parents to find it out from

strangers. This must wound a loving mother deeply, when she feels that she has not her child's confidence.

All is not necessarily settled when a girl has chosen a Catholic of her own age and position in life. He may not possess the qualities that make a good husband. For this his character must be irreproachable, he must be industrious, constant in his enterprises; lastly, there should be harmony of characters between the two, if their married life is to be happy. A few words on each of these. If a woman does not respect her husband she will not be happy, for no true affection can exist; the breach caused by this mistrust and want of respect widens daily, quarrels will result, the children will side with the father or the mother, or perhaps, after fruitless efforts to live peaceably, there will be a separation. Suppose the man be indolent and inconstant. Then pecuniary difficulties will be the great trial, and may end in absolute ruin. Though a man have a fortune, yet he ought to occupy himself in some way; for a husband with nothing to do, who is always interfering in his wife's management of the house, is not easy to support, and it is possible for man and wife to see too much of each other. Little contentions arise and affection cools. Harmony of character is exceedingly important. How many homes are miserable from want of compatibility of temper? Perhaps the wife is extravagant, she only thinks of spending money; the husband is avaricious, he only thinks of hoarding his gold. How can these two ever agree? Here is a woman who loves

society—balls and parties are her great joy, a life of worldliness is her earthly paradise. Her husband is an intellectual man, he lives with his books; there can be no union of sentiments between them. Again, suppose the woman's ambition is to get into a higher rank of society, while the husband is content to remain in his own station. This will be a cause of quarrelling and unhappiness. Many other examples might be given; these suffice to show the danger.

Let us take it for granted that the choice is made and that the future husband has the necessary qualities. How is a girl to conduct herself during the engagement, which we suppose will last some few months if they are to know each other? Since marriage is such a serious matter, the betrothed should pray daily that God may bless their union. Without God's blessing there can be no real happiness, so they will make this the subject of their prayers, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and Communions. It would be well for a Child of Mary to make a retreat before her marriage, that she may study the duties which await her and frame her resolutions for the future.

At home a girl should try to learn all she can about keeping a house economically and training servants. The fact that she expects to be wealthy does not dispense her from acquiring sufficient knowledge to enable her to keep her home in order and cook a dinner, should the servants be ill or wealth take wings and fly away. Great complaints are made about servants and often the root of the difficulty is that the mistresses know

nothing of house-keeping, and command impossibilities. In a house left entirely to servants there must be great extravagance and thus a home is ruined by a wife's ignorance. Every woman ought to know how to cook, clean a room and mend clothes, even though she can afford to pay others to do these things for her. How do many girls prepare for marriage? No sooner are they engaged than they devote all their energy to toilet and frivolous vanities; they neglect home duties, spend hours writing to their intended, increasing His Majesty's Inland Revenue at least daily—in a word they seem to imagine that a primrose path is before them, that a married life is to be all joy with no restraints; they dream of full liberty and independence just when they are putting their necks in the yoke; and thus, when the troubles of married life come, such as mutual support, pinching to make ends meet, sorrow and sickness, they are unprepared to meet them and domestic miseries follow.

One more "don't" in conclusion. During courtship let there be the due reserve *in public* and *in private* befitting those who are to tread the path of God's commandments together. This will exclude silly trifling, petty jealousy, daily or weekly quarrels. It will prevent people making themselves ridiculous in public. What absurd scenes one sees in a train, or in a tram, or in the streets. Though the young woman wears gloves and no rings are visible, yet it is often easy to see whether a young couple are *engaged* or *married*. They rarely make themselves conspicuous after marriage

by absurd demonstrations of affection in public ; but before marriage such scenes are very common and should be avoided. Even worldly people blame such condnct as unbecoming ; but how much less does it befit a serious, pious girl.

These home truths are specially intended for those who are old enough to marry, and they have been put in very plain language. This was necessary, for so many evils result, not from bad intentions or want of goodwill on the part of our Catholic girls, but these evils constantly spring from want of knowledge how to do better. There is often too much reserve between a mother and her daughter ; or God may have deprived a child of her mother, thus there is no one to advise her Sometimes a girl's home is unhappy and she contracts a hasty marriage, in the hopes of improving her position. The consequences are that whole lives are marred and the evil is irreparable. Those, on the other hand, who choose wisely, and prepare sensibly and piously, may hope for a happy married life. Trials will come, but there are two to bear them ; they have the same faith, the same sentiments, the same desire : namely, to serve God here and do His holy will, that, after having served the Master faithfully here below, they may praise Him together for all eternity.

PART II.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S INNER LIFE.

ON TIME.

HAVE you ever sailed down a river into the open ocean? As you sit listlessly on deck, you are fascinated by the moving panorama. Now a quiet village, nestling on the hillside, passes before you. Now it is a secluded valley or a busy town that presents itself. As you pass these varied scenes one by one, you realise that you are travelling onward. Presently you reach the open ocean At first the port, with its wharves, ships and cargoes, are visible. As these fade from your view, the coast stands out like a line separating sky and ocean; but as you proceed, it too disappears. Now, as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing but sky and water visible. You have left behind all those landmarks which enable you to judge of your onward progress. In the rapid river, flowing down silently and steadily to the boundless, fathomless ocean, may we not see a faint image of time and eternity? That silent, rapid river is our life, marked out by days, months and years. Now an event stands out more prominently and brings home to us the fact that the stream of life is carrying us on very swiftly. On that river goes day by day, relentlessly bearing us to the boundless ocean of eternity. Thus humanity goes to its long home. Eternity! How incapable we are

ot understanding what this word means. Stop reading for one moment and try to grasp the idea of an eternal "now," of a moment which you can stop in its course. As you try to arrest this moment and claim it as yours it eludes you and passes on, giving place to another, which will pass in its turn. Have you ever realised that time is a precious gift of God, given to each, with measure, for a definite purpose? Let us pay a visit in spirit to a death-bed. There stretched on a couch is a young girl, perhaps just your age. For her the tide of life is fast ebbing out. A fond mother stands by, doing her utmost to soothe and help her beloved child. How painfully the tick of the clock falls on your ear. Notice the heavy breathing of the sufferer, how irregular it is! At each breath the mother asks, "Is it the last?" How solemn are these last moments of a life! The child is unconscious and already dead to the things of this world; but to the mother what a fearful suspense. How she dreads that moment when God shall claim his own. The breathing becomes slower and fainter, and at last comes that supreme moment when the soul returns to God Who made it. As we stand by a death-bed we learn something of the value of time.

Time is precious because it brings us inestimable graces. The Sacraments, means of acquiring virtues, the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, grace of contrition, opportunities of doing good are all brought to us by time. Time is so precious that all earth's riches cannot purchase it. It is related that, when a favoured Minister of a French king

lay on his death-bed, the monarch, grateful for his past services, sent to ask what favour he desired. The dying man replied: "Let my Sire obtain for me one quarter of an hour, to make my peace with God." "Offence's gilded hand," which does so often "shove by justice," cannot treat time thus. Were it otherwise, the rich would be immortal in their mortality. Neither can we recall the past. Half a man's life may have been spent in crime; midway in the stream he repents and strives to repair the evil. Yet all his efforts cannot bring back one hour. "Time and tide wait for no man," and a day passed is gone for ever, carrying with it our thoughts, words, and deeds. A little child once asked his mother this question: "Mother, where do my thoughts go to when they leave me?" The mother replied: "My child, they go into the memory of God." How true this is. Let us be careful what thoughts we commit to the memory of God. For example, when you sulk for an hour or two because your vanity has been wounded, what thoughts are then hurrying to their destination?

God gives us time as a talent with which we must trade till He comes. At the outest of life He limits its duration. We are stewards, not the owners of our time, and we must use it as God wills. We gauge the value of a thing by what it costs. What has time cost? We have seen that all the wealth of earth cannot purchase it. That man might have time, Jesus shed His precious Blood; hence time is purchased with our Lord's Blood. Lucifer and his companions sinned, and

are lost eternally. For them there was no time for repentance accorded. Once when a priest, who was exorcising a man possessed of a devil, invoked our Blessed Lady, the evil spirit said: "If I had Mary's help and time I should not be a devil." The Apostle tells us: "Ye are bought with a great price," and we know how precious are our souls in God's sight.

Time pursues its course moment by moment, bearing with it what we hold most dear. You are still young, perhaps not yet twenty years of age; you would fain arrest the course of time, but you cannot prevent it robbing you of youth: as we grow older we feel the weight of years and the infirmities of age. Health gives way; we hear people say, "I am not what I was. I cannot work as I used." Time goes on undermining vitality; you do not feel this as yet, but already you notice that time seems to pass more rapidly than when you were a child. The older we get the faster its course seems. How Time with his scythe mows down those we love! How many whom you have known and loved have had to say, "My time has come." Perhaps time has mown down your riches. You once had a wealthy home, now it is a struggle for daily bread. "You are poor," the worlds says. No, you are not so poor after all, for you still possess time, which is a priceless treasure. You are still rich enough to purchase Heaven. You have health and strength, and an immortal soul capable of loving God. Are not these priceless treasures? When St. Francis of Assisi, clad in rags and shivering with cold, was met by his

brother, who asked him mockingly what he would sell his sweat for, the Saint replied, "It is sold to a higher bidder."

What lessons do these thoughts on time teach us? The self-evident conclusion is, "I must use my time well." How are you to do this? Begin by never being idle. You know the time-honoured proverb, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do"; and the Saints tell us that the man, who is idle, does not need a devil to tempt him, which is the same truth put in another light. It is terrible to hear people speak about "killing time." Never use this expression now that you have realised something of its value. To profit by time it is not sufficient merely to work, for the devil himself is an unwearied toiler, who "As a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." We must do useful work and accomplish our daily duty. It is related that a certain monarch had a favourite occupation. It was that of catching flies. Hour after hour he would stand by the window catching flies on the panes of glass, and contemplating with pleasure the heap of dead flies as it grew larger. If, while he was thus engaged, his Ministers called to interview him concerning State affairs, the King would reply, "I have not yet caught my usual number of flies." You will have already drawn the natural conclusion, "The King was surely mad." Yes, he was; but how many sane people pass their lives in less innocent occupation than catching flies. Here is a young girl who devours novel after novel, filling her mind with all kinds of false ideas.

All her day passes thus. She would be better employed catching flies ; that, at least, would not endanger the purity of her soul or inflame her passions.

Another imagines herself an authoress, and composes stories which are "variations" of those she has read in "penny dreadfuls," only a little more incoherent and absurd. Of course, she does not consider it a waste of time ; she means to sell her erratic productions and win fame. No editor has, so far, accepted any of her stories ; but that is because they cannot appreciate her work, so she goes on working for posterity, which it is to be hoped will be duly grateful. If by chance our authoress imagines herself a poetess in embryo, one cannot prophecy whither her imagination may lead her. Is it not a pity to spoil so much good paper which would certainly fetch more as waste paper if it were clean ? Others pass their time in balls, parties and pleasures. They are never idle, pleasures occupies them fully. Alas ! however busy we may be, the moment our work is useless and we are neglecting our duty, we are wasting time.

Time should be used with economy, as we use any costly article. To do this you must have a fixed hour for each duty. What can be done at any moment is often never done. Have a time for work and a time for amusements, giving to each of them its fair share. Economise the spare moments. An author, who had composed a great work, was asked when he had found leisure to write it. He replied, "While waiting at the station for trains." Have some definite subject to study, and do not shrink

from the drudgery work inherent to all study. Read with your pencil in your hand, to jot down a note or epitomise. It is a good thing to take up a "hobby," provided it does not absorb the time which should be given to duty. Choose an inexpensive hobby; collecting stamps is useful, and teaches us geography. A stamp collector will not localise Natal in North America. Botanising is another intellectual and healthy employment; in addition it raises our hearts to God. You may have a talent for painting. Why not decorate your own room or paint a screen? Parents are so proud of their children's work. Scrap books for the sick children cost next to nothing and give great pleasure. Outdoor exercise in moderation is good; overdone it sows the seeds of disease.

What is your hobby? You have none. Then get one at once and you will not be tempted so often to be idle, bad tempered and dreamy. One word more on the advantage of a hobby. Rightly used it forms a splendid training for the soul, and teaches us to conquer self. When we love an occupation it is apt to engross our mind and cause us to neglect other duties. It requires a great effort of the will to leave a pleasant piece of work for a disagreeable one. Now decide how much time you can give to your hobby, and cease the moment that duty calls you elsewhere. If one day you have not had the courage to leave it at the right time, be brave enongh to deprive your self of your hobby the next day.

In your daily rule God must have His time. How much should you give Him? That depends

on your position in life. At least say your ordinary morning and evening prayers regularly. An old soldier, questioned by a priest as to whether he said his prayers, and what prayers he used, replied, indignantly, "I never forget my prayers. On rising I say, O God, Thy servant John is getting up; and at night, O God, Thy servant John is going to bed." Many Catholics, alas, do less than this; they do not even think of God. A fervent Child of Mary will read some good book, such as the Holy Gospels, the "Following of Christ," or a life of some Saint. We spend hours reading fiction, often to no profit: surely we can give God a few moments daily. What about weekday Mass! Go by all means when your other duties permit it, for Mass "is the best and most profitable of all devotions."

Now comes the daily homage to our Lady. A decade of the Rosary is the least you can offer her. If you go to business you can say your rosary in the train or on your road. If your work only employs your hands, you can pray while you work. A servant need not necessarily think about brushes and dustpans all the time she is sweeping a staircase. All these devotions put together would not take more than an hour, and this is not much out of the twenty-four which compose the day. Compare the hours which we spend in sleep, in eating, in recreation, and it will seem little enough. Above all, do not forget the daily examination of conscience. We consider it necessary to wash at least once a day; shall we do less for our soul? To purify our soul we must make fervent acts

of contrition, and to do this we must know our faults, hence the need of self-examination.

While time is ours let us profit by it. If we saw a man throwing away precious stones, we should think he was mad. Is it not madder, by far, to fling away the precious jewel of time, and with it God's choicest blessings? On the other hand, what a beautiful sight it is to see the hoary head going down to the grave full of years and merit, or to look on those who, having lived few years, have furnished a long course. What a joy, when the Angel of God shall declare that for them "Time shall be no more"; to hear the voice of the beloved Master welcoming them and saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

ON READING.

What a reading age we live in! Millions of newspapers, thousands of new books are published yearly. Paper and printing are cheap and both are within the reach of all. Is this a good or a bad thing? All depends on the reader and the books. There is a great deal of unwholesome, bad literature current, but there is also much that is good. The great difficulty consists in making a right choice. The same book may do good to one person and harm to another. Thus a nervous, excitable girl cannot read a sentimental book with impunity, whereas a girl of a calm, placid character will probably not have the patience to wade through it, because she sees the absurdities of the story.

It is no longer the question, "Shall we read?" but "What shall we read?" There are various kinds of books. They may be briefly classified under three heads—Religious, Instructive, and Recreative. It is good to read some of each. Every Child of Mary should make it a practice to read a chapter of a good book daily if possible. The New Testament ranks first, the "Imitation of Christ" is generally mentioned next; then come books of meditation and lives of Saints: the latter require discretion and a Child of Mary should let herself be guided in her choice. Some of the lives of God's Saints

were "more admirable than imitable." We can imitate their virtues, but are not called upon to walk in the extraordinary path that some of them trod. Lives of Saints that are full of visions, ecstasies and miracles may do harm to a girl who is sentimental and unpractical. She will imagine holiness to consist in a thin emaciated countenance, in shunning the society of her fellows, in visions and miraculous gifts. So she may attempt to starve herself, try to live a life of solitude, forgetting that God does not call her to a hermit's life, but to work in the world. But there are also many practical lives of Saints whence we may take examples of virtue that are within our reach. The most useful are those which show that the Saints had not a path of roses to tread, but that, like ourselves, they had to struggle on and sometimes fell. Lives of holy persons also furnish us with many beautiful examples of noble deeds. What one person has done another may do, so why should we not strive to imitate God's heroes? It is a good thing to have favourite Saints, and to aim particularly at imitating them. Most people know something of the lives of our national heroes, they can tell you when they lived and what they did; while of God's Saints and martyrs they know next to nothing. St. Paul animates us to run on the heavenly race-course by the thought of the great deeds of the Saints whom he represents as witnessing our efforts.

How often have you felt conscience-stricken on reading the life of a Saint? There are so many things which we read there, that we have had frequent occasions of doing, yet have let the oppor-

tunity slip. The saints took God's commandments in earnest, they believed His promises firmly ; and loving Him with their whole hearts, rose above the things of earth ; they judged the things of this world from a higher standpoint and thus became Saints. If we could conquer self, and realise that a Saint is one who is faithful in the lesser things of life that he may have grace to triumph over great difficulties, then we should imitate them more frequently by utilising the opportunities of practising virtue which meet us on every hand.

Good books keep these truths before our mind, they cheer us on the road, they furnish us weapons against the false teaching of the world, and bring home to us vividly the beauty of holiness, the value of a soul, the horror we should have of sin. In the "Life of the Curé of Ars" we are told that one evening, when he came in from his sick-calls he picked up a piece of paper from the table, rolled it up and was about to use it to light his candle. Just then the servant came into the room ; seeing what he was doing she called out "Monsieur le Curé, stop ! stop ! you are lighting the candle with a banknote." "Ah !" said the Curé, as he unrolled the paper and examined it. "So it is. Now I daresay, Susan, that if you had seen me committing a venial sin you would not have said one word." Does not an example like this make you understand better the evil of a venial sin than many pages of arguments ? When we read this it reminds us of how many venial sins we have committed for things of less value

than a banknote ; we indulge in angry looks and temper for a book mislaid, or because we are kept waiting at the door.

Then there are books that cultivate the mind. God has given us more or less intellectual power. This gift of God, like all others, should not be allowed to rust. Suppose that you have had a good education, then you must feel a need of reading something instructive of keeping up with the times. What use is it to know what the Greeks and Romans of old did if you know nothing of what is going on to-day ? Our Colonial possessions are constantly increasing, it is good to know how we acquired them. There are wars or "rumours of war," and an educated person should be able to join in a conversation on the subject. Recent discoveries open up a very wide field for study. Besides these topics of the day, it is well to choose some definite subject to study up. If you know English pretty well, take up a foreign language. You can learn to read and write a language fairly correctly by means of the books that are published for self-instruction.

History, for a Catholic, is a very important subject, because it alone furnishes us with many an answer to objections brought against our Faith. As an example, take the assertion that the Catholics are so bloodthirsty, which, it is argued, is proved by the persecution of the Protestants who suffered for their faith in Queen Mary's reign. To begin with, the number is very much exaggerated, as a rule : but since our adversaries advance numbers let us meet them on their own ground

and give them a few. Henry VIII. persecuted Catholics for refusing to acknowledge him as head of the Church during the last twenty years of his reign. Then came Edward VI., who reigned six years; the persecution of Catholics still continued. Mary came to the throne and had a brief reign of five years. Under her, though often against her will, Protestants suffered. Elizabeth succeeded, and during her reign of forty-five years Catholics were under the penal laws. Now add up these numbers, and we get seventy-one years of persecution against Catholics compared with five against Protestants, and to these we could add the penalties enforced by the Stuarts. Which side is the blacker? Do you see now how history gives you weapons to fight for the truth? Even though you only give four hours a week to acquiring useful knowledge, you will know a great deal by the end of twenty years, especially if you frequently consult a dictionary and an atlas. The love of study is a great antidote to the passion for novel reading; for a deep, serious mind cannot spend hours on mere fiction.

Is fiction then useless? By no means; it gives us a command over language, enriches our vocabulary, and sets forth many beautiful word pictures before our eyes. A moral lesson can be given by a story well worked out and will often be read by those who detest serious reading and sermons. Public evils may often be remedied by a book which shows them up. To take an example, how much Dickens' works have done for social evils. Novels too, afford us that relaxation of the

mind which is so necessary after prolonged mental strain. But several serious questions meet us at the outset when we speak of reading novels. What kind of novels may we read? How can we tell when a novel is bad? How much time may we give to them?

The first condition required in selecting our novel is that it may be good; by this we understand *that it shall be well written, that the moral be good.* The first condition depends very much on the reader, for what one would consider well written might not equally please a person of better education. In any case nothing like coarseness should be tolerated, and when this evil is veiled it is even more dangerous. Those novels which are written in "gutter language" are not fit for any one. We hurry past when such echoes reach us in our crowded thoroughfares; surely it can be no pleasure to sit in an easy chair drinking in such filth. Realistic novels of this descripton are unfit for any young girl. Hence, if ever you are reading a book, and you find something you would not care to read aloud, that makes the blush rise to your cheeks, close that book at once, and do not open it again; destroy it if you can. A girl who can read such tales and smile is not pure-minded. When is a novel bad? Evidently when it teaches anything contrary to the law of God. Still all novels with a good moral are not fit for anyone. Suppose you are reading a book, it haunts you, you dream of it at night, and in the daytime, live with the heroine; clearly this book is bad for you, since it

excites your passions and imagination to such an extent.

Here is a judgment passed on bad books by one who wrote them himself: "I cannot look at one of my books without shuddering; instead of instructing I corrupt, instead of nourishing the mind I poison it: but passion carries me away, and with all my eloquent discourses I am simply *a murderer*" (J. J. Rousseau). The Saints themselves have been tempted by bad books; we find St. Theresa confessing her weakness thus: "Reading novels was the cause of my faults. It stifled all my serious thoughts. I took pleasure in dress, in having white hands; I loved scents. It did not strike me at the time as being sinful; but afterwards I saw how dangerous these things were." Where Saints have trembled, shall we foolishly brave the danger?

Here is a young girl devouring a novel; she reads on and on, and the book is read from cover to cover at one sitting. When she has finished it she feels discontented, disgusted with her position in life, angry because she is not handsome, or rich, disinclined to perform her daily duties. Such a book is evidently bad for her, since it unfits her for work. Again, you read a book about some girl that was "misunderstood": henceforth you are disposed to look on yourself as a victim; in future no rebuke is ever merited, it is always the effect of ill-will or tyranny on the part of others. The merest trifles become a mountain of grief; a friend is the confidant of all your imaginary troubles, while the person to whom you should explain matters is left

in the dark. Evidently, this book is bad for you, whatever it may be for others. Take one more example. Jessie has a book ; she is devouring it as she lies in bed. A step is heard ; quickly it is hidden, it goes under her pillow ; when she gets up her first care is to put the book under lock and key. You may be certain either that she is reading a bad book, or at least a forbidden one. Here, perhaps, you are disposed to ask : "How am I to know what books I may read ? Can I not examine them for myself ?" No ; a young girl is not competent to examine books for herself any more than she would be authorised in tasting various substances under pretence of distinguishing which were poison. That must be left for those who are older and more experienced. The best way to know what you may read is to ask a competent person. If you have a library in connection with the Sodality you may be sure the books are all safe. If you have none, try to get a catalogue of some Catholic library and select from it when ordering books from a public library. You will not be able to get Catholic books, of course ; but you will be able to get plenty of good works of fiction by Protestant authors.

There is one other danger to be avoided, namely, do not imagine that because you were allowed one book by a given author that you may read all his works. This is a great mistake which is frequently made. In general, avoid books dealing with sensational, unreal plots, the occult sciences, Agnostic principles, and religious controversy directed against the Church. Frequently there

is a vein of evil running through an author's works, which however, does no harm because, fortunately, many girls take in only the story, interest themselves in the personages, and do not perceive the undercurrent of teaching. The way to grasp an author's tendencies is to read several of his books consecutively and from a critical point of view. This is beyond a young girl, and perhaps it is well that it should be.

You must not expect to go through life and read books without seeing things contrary to your faith ; but surely if you know your religion and are firm in your faith you will have sense and *courage* enough to close your book if you feel that it is doing you harm. If a girl really loves her mother she will not love her less because she hears her spoken against ; nay, she will love her more, and show her indignation at such a calumny. The cases are parallel : there can be no true love of the Church if the first adverse wind shakes your faith and tempts vou to deviate from the right path.

One question remains to be answered. How much time should be given or may be given to reading? All depends on your position in life. If you are independent you can give a certain time daily. A lady who was addicted to indiscriminate novel reading once consulted a priest on the subject. He gave her two rules : first, never to give more than two hours daily ; second, never to read a book if she could not offer the action to God before commencing. These rules are very wise, but evidently all cannot give two hours daily to novel read-

ing, nor is it desirable they should. Two hours a day means seven hundred and thirty hours per year, and this is one-twelfth of the whole. How many useful things might be learned, how many acts of charity performed in that time. A pious Child of Mary could be contented with less, say seven hours a week. If you have to earn your living, then read going to and from business and in your leisure moments; but never take up your book to read when you should be working. You would scorn to rob an employer of sixpence, yet if you earn sixpence an hour and you read during that time, it is a real theft, no matter what you may call it. The second rule is practical for all. Never read a book if you feel that it would be a mockery to offer that action to God. He wills that we should take recreation, and allows us lawful pleasure which we can take for God, just as we perform any other duty for Him. Now we cannot say, "O my God, I offer Thee this action which I intend to perform for Thy glory," if we know the book is one which we ought not to read, or if we are reading it at the wrong time. Even when the book is a good one it is not advisable to read in bed, except when this is done as a cure for sleeplessness. As Christians, it is better to fall asleep with some pious thoughts on our mind, for is not sleep an image of death? A novel is apt to keep us awake, but if we fall asleep over it some fatal accident may result from fire.

One word in conclusion. We should try to support Catholic libraries and periodicals. It is a great complaint that Catholic books and maga-

zines are so dear. If the demand were greater the prices could be reduced. There are thousands of Children of Mary in the United Kingdom; suppose they all did their best to promote the circulation of Catholic literature, what a good work would be done. You try for one, and begin by finding out what Catholic magazine you can subscribe to and order it at once. Doubtless you have plenty of other magazines at home, so give up one in favour of a Catholic periodical. It is sometimes objected that they are not so well written or so beautifully illustrated as others. There is some truth in this, but it is due to the same reason as their dearness—namely, Catholics do not support them. We all know that paper is cheap, and when there is a larger circulation books can be had for less and authors can be better paid. So we will each do our part, and thus help on a good work, for the Press is a mighty power for good and for evil.

ON THE BESETTING SIN.

ST. PAUL in his Epistle to the Hebrews, draws us a beautiful word picture of the conflicts of some of God's Saints. He enumerates their virtues, and would fain animate us by the great "cloud of witnesses over our head," to lay aside "every weight and sin which surrounds us," and "run by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus." The comparison of a race is singularly appropriate to our life on earth. The athletes prepare themselves for the race; they put off all that might hinder their running freely. There is a fixed starting-point and a given time. The goal and the prize are ever before them as incentives to deeds of valour. All compete (and here the comparison falls short), but one is crowned. In the race to Heaven the starting-point is the moment God's grace takes possession of our soul, which is at our baptism in the case of those who receive this Sacrament in infancy. The racecourse is the brief span of our life, its length is known only to God; the goal is the end of our pilgrimage; the prize, no other than God himself, for all eternity, given to all who persevere unto the end. What a crowd assembles to cheer on the competitors in an earthly race! They are there to encourage during the course and to congratulate on the victory. So

in the heavenly race the saints are witnesses, cheering us on by their example, helping us by their prayers.

Before the race takes place what preparations are made! The barriers are placed, the road is cleared, the starting-place decided, the prize prepared. St. Paul had seen many of these races, which were national games among the Romans and Greeks; he had them before his mind when he wrote the text quoted above. In the heavenly race what are the obstacles that beset us? They are numerous: some are interior, others exterior, and certain obstacles are peculiar to different ages; thus, the difficulties in youth differ from those we experience in old age. They differ also with the character of each person: we have not all the same "weight" to lay aside, though we have all a "weight"; and the object of these simple home truths is to put it clearly before you. Just as we differ in features, in health, and in natural gifts, so we differ in the spiritual life. We each have our own individual burdens, our "weight." What is meant by this? In what does this weight consist?

In general, the world, the devil, and the flesh are the burden for all mankind, yet they do not employ the same snares for each soul. For one the frivolities of the world have little or no attraction; for another the grosser forms of sin, proposed by the devil, fall without effect. Yet all have to be on their guard lest the world or the devil cast a stumbling-block in the way. St. Paul reproached the early Christians for being faint-hearted in the

race, asking what had hindered them, seeing that formerly they had run so well.

The greatest enemy of the three is the flesh, that is our corrupt nature, because it within us, and is precisely the means utilised by the devil to lead us into sin. We cannot get away from ourselves; we carry our evil inclinations with us everywhere and they are a constant source of danger. Just as trees become more firmly rooted the longer they grow, so as we advance in age our passions grow stronger. The time to correct them is while we are young; if we wait for old age it will be next to impossible. It was through covetousness that Judas lost his soul; if we could visit those regions where hope never penetrates, and question the lost souls as to the cause of their eternal condemnation, we should hear this answer, "My besetting sin." The devil makes use of this as a weapon to destroy us. Education may do something towards rooting out this evil; but if not corrected for the love of God it will only take a more civilised form without being radically better. Thus, as a child you used to stamp and scream instantly when thwarted; now you can refrain from these exterior signs of passions, especially in the presence of strangers, but it finds vent in sarcasm.

In most persons there is one particular defect in character, it is their weak side. It may be an excess or a defect of a quality; thus the miser sins from want of generosity, the spendthrift from an excess, while virtue is to be found between these extremes. Some characters have several defects, which seem

to walk abreast and act as occasions call them forth from the rank. Every Christian should know the spiritual foe which besets him, much more should each Child of Mary be able to distinguish the enemy. A hidden foe is ever more dangerous than an open enemy. Can we find out this adversary? Can we know our besetting sin? Can we conquer it? To all these questions the answer is "Yes." The ancient philosophers had the maxim "Know thyself." Common sense alone would teach us this. It will avail little to know others if we are unconscious of our own failings.

By what means can we ascertain our predominant passion? There are three: prayer, self-examination, and the help of a friend. St. Augustine prayed daily: "Lord, grant me to know myself and thee." St. Philip Neri knew himself well when he said, "Lord, beware of me, or I shall betray thee to-day." The devil does his utmost to prevent our acquiring self-knowledge. Worldlings never trouble about their defects because the devil blinds them; it is his interest to do so. Prayer, therefore, heads the list of means, because if we would find an object it is necessary to have eyesight and light. In what concerns the spiritual life we are of our nature blind; what is spiritual is above us, it is supernatural and belongs to a higher sphere. Only God can light up the inmost recess of the human soul and reveal man to himself. Suppose a Child of Mary reads this: it interests her, but ten to one she will begin at the wrong end, and will examine her conduct before having recourse to God. No, in this as in all things, begin at the

right end, *i.e.*, with God. Ask Him to enlighten you respecting the hidden foe. Then comes self-examination. Here there are beaten paths to follow. What sin do we commit most frequently? What sin costs us the most to conquer? The answer will invariably reveal the name of the traitor, and perhaps those of his companions; for besetting sins, like most tyrants, have a suite of followers at their service. Hence you see the importance of knowing it. In a war between Achab, King of Israel and the King of Syria, a very wise order was given by the latter. "Ye shall not fight against any, great or small, but against the King of Israel only." For, evidently, if the head be cut off the members are powerless.

We can find out our besetting sin by asking ourselves what sin we have to confess most frequently. What defects are we constantly reproached with by our parents and friends? When it is some glaring fault there is no difficulty in discovering it, but not unfrequently it hides itself, and silently and surely produces fruits of death. It may even pass for a virtue: thus there are not wanting people who canonise pride and inculate it to their children. A foolish father will praise his boy as being such a noble spirit, he will not give in to any one—the same is true of the devil! He even counsels him to yield to no one, not to let himself be trodden under foot. How can a child see any evil in pride after such teaching from a father? Here we have a Child of Mary who is exceedingly weak in character, she has a trusting, clinging nature, she never dared to

differ from any one in her life. It is very possible she may look on this as amiability of character and does not see that it often leads her to sacrifice the truth and admit false principles. Others frequently know us better than we know ourselves. In a large family brothers and sisters rarely spare each other the truth. A Christian mother watches her child and tries to discover the weak side of her character. A friend, again, is often a great help in revealing us to ourselves. If we could hear our enemies speak freely of us we should not long be at a loss as to the name of our domestic foe. One very good means of knowing ourselves is to note when any sudden joy or sorrow is felt, and to ask ourselves the cause. Thus a proud girl has just heard something to her praise. She is all smiles and as merry as possible ; everything goes well so long as she savours the tit-bit of praise. Again, she feels suddenly sad. What is the matter? She has heard something that humbles her, so for a time she is silent and sad, ruminating on the insult. If a girl be frank with herself, these sudden alternations of pleasure and sorrow will give her a clue to her besetting sin. Take another example. Here is a boy who is amusing himself and is happy ; he is called off to do something and immediately he feels angry and discontented. His besetting sin, love of pleasure has been thwarted.

It is also useful to notice when and where we fall : sometimes one act reveals a person's character ; this is the case with children, who fortunately have not the same tact to conceal humiliating defects

as adults. A little girl, who had been the only child until her third year, had a little sister. She was not pleased, but did not show her anger outwardly. One day the mother had her baby on her knee; the elder child came up and began to caress it. Presently the mother felt her arm pinched by the child, who imagined she was pinching baby. How much childish jealousy that pinch revealed! It is when interests clash in a family that one act will so often reveal a person. In childhood we show our besetting sin pretty clearly, so by looking back we acquire an insight into our character, for "the child is father to the man," and "men are but children of a larger growth."

Having discovered the foe we must combat it *supernaturally*, *generously*, *constantly*. Sometimes we are so ashamed of a fault and the humiliations it procures us, that we decide to correct ourselves. This may be useful as a spur, but we must have more supernatual motives if we would really pull up the roots; to merely correct the exterior would be lopping the branches while the roots spread. A boy in a college was in the habit of constantly picking quarrels with his companions. Boys do not as a rule spare each other's feelings. His class decided to give him a lesson. One of them drew a coat-of-arms for the offender. It represented a porcupine with its quills spread out, and it held a scroll in its mouth bearing this motto: "Whoever touches me gets pricked." He was duly presented with this, and naturally acquired the unenviable name of "porcupine." This joke went home; the boy resolved to amend, and did so in earnest; had

he merely repressed the exterior sallies of humour it would have been ineffectual. There are plenty of people for whom such a coat-of-arms would be appropriate. "In the warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we must depend not on ourselves, but on God alone." It is utterly impossible for you to do anything that counts for Heaven without God's grace. When you gain a victory the glory must be for the Master, and the moment you are proud of your success and satisfied with yourself your fall is at hand, for God withdraws His help from those who trust in self. "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

We must combat resolutely. Each time we go to confession Our Lord expects us to resolve "carefully to avoid the occasion of sin." The besetting sin is generally the source of all our other sins. Hence we must be fully determined to wage an incessant warfare against it; there can be no truce. A great step has been made when we can look our sin in the face, and admit that we are proud, lazy or selfish. Travellers tell us that the ostrich, when pursued, sometimes buries its head in the sand, and evidently deems itself safe because it has refused to face the enemy, instead of which it makes escape impossible. If we are resolved to conquer a fault we shall examine ourselves daily in it and be constant in our efforts. We must make a practical resolution to avoid this or that particular fault. It is useless to say, "I will never be proud, lazy, or obstinate again." You must "divide and conquer." See, *when* you are proud,

now you show the fault, and *with whom.* Then you have something definite for attack. If you try otherwise you will fail. A farmer's lad was once told to weed a large field ; he went out early in the morning, pulled up a few weeds here and there, and then left off in despair of ever finishing the work. The farmer came the next day and found nothing done ; he called the lad, who confessed frankly that he had not the courage to undertake such a task. The farmer then told the boy how to set about the work and, marking off a corner of the field, told him to weed it that day. The next day he did the same, and in a week the field was weeded. He had divided and conquered. So it is in the spiritual life. Suppose you are disobedient? Whom do you disobey? "Mother ; I dare not disobey father." When do you disobey ? "When she asks me to help in the house, to darn the stockings, to dust the what-not and knick-knacks." Then your real fault is not disobedience ; it takes that form, but the root is laziness, or love of pleasing yourself. Are you sincere in your desire to conquer yourself? Then here is the proper resolution. "I will do at once what I am told, especially when I am asked to darn or dust." That is something definite and practical. Make your resolution in the morning, and ask yourself in the evening if you have been faithful. One great point to notice is that in the work of correcting our defects, no one can do more than help us and furnish us the occasions. We must correct ourselves. It is, like our salvation which depends on it—a personal affair. A man

may be kept back by force from crime, but he is not thereby corrected ; and in those cases where force comes to help our weak will, as in the case of children who are punished for their faults, still it is true that

> Whoever overcomes by force,
> Hath overcome but half his foe ;

for when the restraint is moved the bad habit quickly grows again.

A few words of caution in conclusion. Do not exact too much of yourself by an excess of good-will. The growth of virtue is slow, like that of nature. We cannot see a tree grow, yet we know it does ; so it is possible for us to grow in virtue without perceiving it. If we saw our progress we should be puffed up with pride, and so lose the merit of our efforts. Be prepared for falls, we cannot live without sin. All we can do is to diminish their number and malice. Let them at least be only sins of human frailty. To each resolution we make we should add this clause : "I will renew this resolution each time I break it." After a fall this will help us to avoid discouragement, which frequently does us more harm than the sin itself. So let us take courage and, knowing our besetting sin, with the help of God's grace fight against it supernaturally, generously and constantly. Mary, our Mother, is one of the heavenly witnesses, and she does more than look on. She assists her children by her prayers and the graces she obtains for them, and thus helps them onward, upward, heavenward.

ON THE USE OF THE IMAGINATION.

GOD created us perfect in body and soul. Man, in a state of grace, was master of his senses; the intellect led the way, the will followed submissively; the imagination was kept within due bounds and used as a help to serve God. Then came the fall. How did this affect the powers of man's soul? Is man now what he was when God created him? Take a simple comparison which will clear up the matter. Suppose you let your watch fall, what happens? The watch, if not completely broken, is at least out of order; it now gains or loses, stops by fits and starts. The watch is useless, since you can no longer trust the hands. So, through the fall, the hierarchy, so to say, of the powers in man's soul has been subverted. The intellect cannot keep its place, it no longer leads, but is frequently under the control of the will, that faculty which has suffered the most from the fall. We feel this when we would fain do right, and yet fail to accomplish our good desires.

What about the imagination? That too, has suffered greatly from the fall. In God's designs, like all the other powers, it was given us to do good. Now it is often a hindrance. What is the imagination? It is that power which we possess of picturing out a thing to ourselves. Imagina-

tion may be compared to sight, which is either good or defective. Sight may be defective in various ways. We hear of people being long-sighted, far-sighted, or double-sighted. Some, again, suffer from colour blindness or limited range of vision. What does a person do who is aware that he has a defect in his sight? He takes advice, uses spectacles, or follows the advice of an oculist, and above all, he distrusts his eyes. It would be foolish to act otherwise. The imagination may be compared to sight and it has like effects. It enables us to see things, as it were with the mind. It brings back the past. Have you ever been in a great danger, say a fire or a storm at sea? How vividly you can recall the scene, how you live it over again. Something has amused you, afterwards a word reminds you of the incident, and you burst into a fit of laughter as though you actually saw it again. A remark is made in our hearing, or we see two people whispering; immediately imagination goes to work and supplies the motives or object of the conversation. We think of the future, and foresee this or that result from such a step. Thus we see imagination affects the past, present, and future. Is imagination wholly bad? No, it may be a most useful auxiliary on the road to holiness if properly curbed. It has its *dangers* and its *advantages*. The essential point is to keep it in check, and let it be servant, not mistress. St. Theresa calls imagination "the maniac of the house," and speaks strongly of the duty of controlling it.

What dangers arise from the imagination? A

great many, and a few examples will prove this assertion. Be it said in passing, however, that this faculty is generally most active in youth, and especially in women. A little child has seen an accident, he is terribly excited, relates the story and adds details which you know to be false. Is the child telling lies ? Probably not ; his imagination has the upper hand, so that he cannot distinguish clearly between what he saw and what he imagined—here imagination leads to a material sin of untruth. An evident duty calls to action, as when Jonas was sent by God to the people of Nineveh. Jonas did not wish to go, his imagination suggested all kinds of difficulties : the people would not believe him, God would forgive them, etc., and the result of listening to his imagination was that he disobeyed God. How often this fault is repeated. A Child of Mary has been neglecting her duty aud her mother rightly reproves her for it—perhaps in the presence of a third person. Now, the child, instead of accepting the reproof humbly, lets her imagination exaggerate the blame : her mother does not love her, she never was the favourite, she is the only one who is ever scolded, her sisters have never been humbled in that way. By brooding over her grievances she heaps them up. Again, a girl imagines that she cannot eat a certain kind of food. She declares it makes her ill, yet if she partakes of it unawares no inconvenience results. Another mania common to girls is to imagine they cannot eat. Many an illness is thus brought on. When imagination rules a person they really feel the pain of their imaginary

grievance. An old gentleman, who was particularly fidgety about draughts, was one day sitting near the fire reading the paper. His wife came in, closed the door carefully, and sat down to write a letter. Presently she opened a drawer; the old gentleman heard it, shivered, and exclaimed angrily, "Do shut that window, there is such a terrible draught!" No doubt his imagination made him feel cold.

When a pleasure is awaiting us, how often we over-estimate the happiness it will procure us. The prodigal is an example of this. He saw life before him, and imagined that wealth and independence could procure friends and happiness for ever. How many a girl marries in haste, falsely persuading herself that she is to live happily and with no restraint ever after. It is only in novels that this happens. In real life, even if the marriage is a happy one it is generally then that the trials begin: health may fail, speculations may be unsuccessful, a loved child is taken. Sometimes a girl is rather delicate, but thinks it interesting to be treated as an invalid. So she refuses the necessary remedies, will neither obey the doctor nor her parents. If she had to earn her living it would be better for her, for her imaginary ailments would soon be cured by exercise and occupation. Such manias are common to young girls, especially when parents are not firm enough. Imagination causes us to over-estimate our talents, attainments, and moral worth, it leads us to make ourselves ridiculous. Take, for example, the people who own that dangerous thing "a *little*

knowledge." They over-estimate their stock-in-trade, venture to discuss knotty points of which they know little beyond the name; then follow rash statements, and they finish by committing themselves to most glaring absurdities and contradictions. For :—

> All smatt'rers are more brisk and pert
> Than those that understand an art ;
> As little sparkles shine more bright
> Than glowing coals that give them light.

People laugh at them for their self-conceit, and take pleasure in "drawing them out." It is a proof of wisdom to admit candidly our ignorance. No man knows everything, life is too short for that ; and it has been truly said, that a wise man knows what he knows, what he does not know, and further, can find what he wants to know.

Day-dreams are offshoots of the imagination. Look at that young girl at the piano. She is passionately fond of music, and as she plays, imagination works, she dreams, recalls scenes, puts words to her notes, and indulges a morbid train of thought which stirs up the passions. Perhaps it is a book which has the same effect. When a girl gets lost in a book, she sees the hero as a real personage, her book falls from her hands, and she dreams on, creating castles in the air which she inhabits, like a princess in one of the romances of the Middle Ages. A girl in these day-dreams holds imaginary conversations, and sometimes weaves out a tale which she persuades herself is true ; curiously enough, the "I" is always the focus in

these inventions. What happens if a pious girl has the imagination excessively developed? The danger here is very great, for it leads to over or under-estimating sins. In most cases, scrupulous persons are victims of their imagination, though self-will generally comes in as well. They have been told to spend a reasonable time in preparing their confession. They insist on spending hours, and only get more confused. They have been told to go to Communion, yet their imagination holds them back. Do you see now some of the evils of imagination? When we give way to exaggeration a whole train of sins comes with it, such as neglect of duty, waste of time, disobedience, sadness, and neglect of prayer. After all, what is madness, that most terrible scourge? It is imagination mastering reason.

Are there no remedies for exaggeration? Yes, there are plenty: a very good remedy is to live in the present; the past has gone, the future may never be ours; but we have the present, and by sanctifying the present we prevent the imagination from running ahead. Work is another means of curbing it, especially work which occupies our mind; here a hobby is useful. Manual labour is generally no cure, since it leaves us free to think. It is wise, when we are subject to indulge our imagination, never to take any resolution at night. "Sleep on it," is the old adage. So often at night all looks lost; we think and work ourselves up to a certain pitch of excitement. Day comes; we have rested and are calmer. Most, if not all, of the phantoms of the night, the anticipated dangers,

the overwhelming task, have vanished. Have you never remarked the different effects which a ghost story produces, according as it is related in the morning or the evening? It is because at night we are generally tired and the nervous system is overstrained. Darkness also increases our fear. There are certainly more crimes commited at night than during the day. As a proof of this, when some crime, such as murder, has been committed in the forenoon, people remark: "It was done in broad daylight too." Many evils of the imagination might be remedied if we only took time to hear both sides of a story. One person comes and tells us something unfavourable that has been said against us. Without asking for an explanation, we cut the person who said it, when perhaps there was no ill-will on their part, or the words have been misquoted. If you are subject to day-dreams avoid sensational books. Some girls can read them and only laugh at the absurdities they contain. The moment a book carries you out of yourself and excites you, put it down and do not read the rest. Learn to distrust your impressions as you would distrust defect of sight; ask advice and act upon it. If your imagination leads you to interpret amiss all you see, it requires great courage and a strong will, aided by the grace of God to conquer. Charity is a sovereign remedy for that form of exaggeration which makes us always suspect that others are talking about us or plotting against us. If we love our neighbour, we shall interpret his actions favourably.

Obedience is the only cure for scrupulosity;

scruples come from an aberration of judgment which is caused mainly by the imagination, dethroning reason, at least on the subject about which a person is scrupulous. Fidelity to duty is another remedy for curbing the imagination. We must try to realise that God, Who has shaped out our daily path of duty, never bids us do a thing, without at the same time, giving us the necessary grace. Thus, when our Lord called St. Peter to come to Him on the water, He upheld him miraculously; as long as St. Peter had faith in Christ and forgot himself and the angry billows, all went well; but the moment he doubted he began to sink. Frequently God seems to ask impossible things; but if we attempt the apparent impossibility with firm faith and an energetic will, the difficulties soon vanish or we surmount them. Thus, when our Lord told the paralytic to stretch forth his hand, it was an action which he could not naturally perform, since the arm was paralysed; but he tried with all simplicity, without reasoning, and as he made the effort, God gave strength to the withered limb. A positive duty must always be faced in spite of the forebodings of imagination, since, like St. Paul, we can say, "I can do all things in Him, Who strengtheneth me." This truth is also beautifully expressed in the familiar lines:

> As thy day thy strength shall be,
> This should be enough for thee;
> He Who knows thy frame, will spare
> Burdens more than thou canst bear.

We have spoken about the imagination and of

the means to curb it; and we have seen how this faculty, like defective vision, causes us to see double to over-estimate or under-rate difficulties. At times there is the colour blindness of the imagination, which prevents us from distinguishing one thing from another, or there is the limited range of vision which prevents us taking in all the aspects of a situation. Yet, just as defective vision can be remedied, so there are means to counteract the extravagance of the imagination, and some of these remedies have been pointed out. But are there no advantages in having a vivid imagination? Certainly, it has its advantages; like fire, it is an excellent servant though a bad master. This faculty is a gift of God. The power of picturing a scene is of great utility in mental prayer; and St. Ignatius, in his method of meditation, appeals to the imagination in what is called the "first prelude," which consists in placing ourselves, in spirit, in presence of the persons and places that form the subject of our meditation. The method of mental prayer called contemplation appeals largely to the imagination. No work of art was ever created without imagination. The musician, artist, sculptor and author need it to produce a masterpiece. Before an artist touches the canvas he conceives a picture in his mind, and this mental picture is what he strives to reproduce. A sculptor, before taking up the chisel, sees by the imagination the image he wishes to produce. No man of genius was ever devoid of imagination. Look at Shakespeare; what wonderful fertility of conception his works show! So it is with great minds.

Imagination often sweetens life; it represents to us a pleasure that is awaiting us, we enjoy it by anticipation, and are cheered by the thought to accomplish the task that awaits completion before we can grasp the reward. How you can build up plans for future holidays; what varied pleasures you anticipate. In all these forecastings imagination plays a large part. Like all the gifts of God, it is given us to use for His glory, and as a means of sanctification. It may and does often form the occasion of some sacrifice, and this obtains for us a lasting reward in the next world. Have you recognised that your imagination leads you into faults? If so strive to repress it. Little by little, man by strenuous effort must endeavour to regain that command over himself which was the privilege of Adam before his fall. This perfect mastery will only be obtained when we reach Heaven; it presupposes labour here below, since none are crowned but those who have striven in the life-long conflict.

ON TEMPTATION.

"TEMPTATION." How familiar that word is. It falls on our ear like the burden of a well-known song. Before we could speak plainly we stammered it out, when kneeling at a mother's knee with closed eyes and clasped hands, we said our daily prayer, that prayer taught us by Jesus Himself, "lead us not into temptation." We did not understand what the word meant then, but as we grew up the practical knowledge of temptation dawned upon us. We had but just arrived at the use of reason, we could not then define the word "temptation," yet we knew that it was hard to be good, and we felt bad inclinations surging in our childish heart, and even at that tender age we realised that it was easier to do evil than to do good. We were conscious of meaning to be good and yet being naughty. Temptation begins with the dawn of reason, it follows us through life, and will only leave us on the threshold of eternity.

The word temptation signifies "to try." Men test the quality of gold and silver, the strength of wood and iron, in order to know their value and suitability for a given purpose. Man is created by God for a sublime end, and he too must be tried as "gold in the furnace." By whom is man tried? Holy Scripture tells us, "*God* did tempt Abraham"; again, we read that Christ was led by the Spirit into the desert to "be tempted by the *devil*." St. Peter, speaking of evildoers, tells us "they allure by the desires of *fleshy riotousness*."

while St. John warns us that "All that is in the *world* . . . is not of the Father." We are told that the whole world lies in darkness, and that we are to shun it. From these examples we learn that learn that there are four sources whence temptation may come—*God*, the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*.

Temptations may come from God, but here notice that God tempts no man in the sense of proposing anything evil, but permits temptation for our trial, merit, or punishment. When the devil wished to tempt Job, he appeared among the "sons of God," to ask our Heavenly Father's permission. God allowed him to work his will on Job, provided he did not touch his body. Job was faithful to God, in spite of the temporal losses which were brought upon him by Satan, who then asked for permission to try him further. God removed the previous restiction, but forbade the devil to take Job's life. This shows us that the devil like a dog chained up, cannot go further than God allows him. We read also in Holy Scripture of how God tried Abraham's faith when He commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, and in both these cases God tried His servants to increase their merit.

Secondly, *the devil*, who goes about like a roaring lion, tempts us by the evil thoughts he puts into our mind. Thirdly, *the flesh*, that is, our own natural inclinations, tempts us, prompting us to allow ourselves every satisfaction, at the risk of compromising our eternal happiness. Lastly, *the world*, by its false maxims and evil examples, is a source of temptation. Truly the life of man upon earth is one long warfare. How is poor humanity

to escape the snares of the world, the flesh, and the devil? It is possible, for God has promised that with the temptation there shall be "an issue" that we may be able to bear it. Temptation, in itself, is not an evil thing, since, when resisted, it enables us to glorify God, to merit precious graces and expiate our sins. Were it not so, God would not allow temptation to overtake us. How a mother shields her infant from suffering! Yet a painful operation is necessary or the child will grow up a cripple. The mother would suffer gladly for the child but this cannot be. The child must suffer. It is for its good; and just because the mother loves her child so dearly, she consents to see it suffer. So God loves poor fallen humanity, and since trial and suffering are necessary to purify mankind, He allows it for each one but limits the trial to a minimum. When the purification is finished the trial ceases, and our Heavenly Father ever fits the burden to the back.

In every temptation consented to there are three steps: the thought of doing what we know to be wrong, taking pleasure in the thought and the sinful action. An example will show these more clearly. A boy is on his way to school: he has to pass through an orchard. There he sees some beautiful ripe peaches. They are destined for the market and he has been strictly forbidden to touch them. The moment his eyes fall on the peaches the thought comes, "Take one, no one is looking, it will not be missed." He stands hesitating; like Eve he sees it is good, he longs for one, he enjoys it by anticipation. The second stage of the temp-

tation is now reached, he is taking pleasure in the thought. What remains ? If he continues looking and longing, in a few moments, after glancing around uneasily to make sure no one is at hand, he will stretch forth his hand, take the fruit, and the sin of disobedience is committed. Suppose that, side by side with the agreeable thoughts provoked by the temptation, a warning is heard within, "Be careful, you have been told not to touch those peaches ; you will be disobeying if you do." It is conscience speaking ; if the boy listens he will run off quickly to school. He has conquered a temptation, acquired merit for Heaven, and strengthened the virtue of obedience in his soul. Note particularly that the sin begins when we deliberately take pleasure in the thought of doing the evil, which the devil proposes.

Sometimes perhaps, you have been worried by a temptation ; you resisted it, but it returned again and again. When it was over you were uneasy as to whether you had sinned or not. One simple question will frequently settle the doubt. Did you take wilful pleasure in the evil thought ? If so you have sinned. Did the thought vex you, did you long to be rid of it ? Then you have not sinned. Do not confuse the involuntary pleasure you may feel with the wilful consent. In the above example the boy could not refrain from desiring the fruit. Supposing him to like peaches, he could not bring himself to believe that they were nasty ; but while liking and desiring one he could say, "I cannot have it except at the price of a sin of disobedience and this would offend God." It is just the sacrifice

which we make in refusing an unlawful pleasure that constitutes our merit. Once a little girl was standing looking at a fruit she had been forbidden to touch. The mother, unseen by the child, was watching her from the window. Presently the child folded her arms behind her back and raised herself on tip-toe. The mother looked on anxiously ; was the child about to disobey ? No. She merely *kissed* the fruit and ran away. That little girl had gained a victory over self. She told her mother all about it in the evening, and explained that she had put her hands behind her back for fear her fingers might take the fruit if she allowed them to touch it. The Guardian Angel must have rejoiced over that child's victory. Do not be uneasy, therefore, about not feeling an intense repulsion for the proposed action. It is sufficient that we feel a horror of the sin.

How are we to conquer temptation ? There are various means. One is to keep calm. You know well that if you throw down a ball with force it rebounds and strikes you again. Suppose you have a stone in your hand and wish to get rid of it. You can either throw it from you with all your strength, or you can simply let it drop. Now the same holds good with temptations ; let them drop, do not repulse them with violent efforts. How can this be done ? By occupying ourselves with something else. For example, you are tempted to indulge in angry thoughts. Do not remain giving yourself free license to think, but go and do something which will take your thoughts off the subject. Another example will make it clearer. You go on

your knees to pray ; perhaps you wish to make a meditation. The angry thought comes. As soon as you perceive it, which may not be for some time, go on with your meditation as if nothing had happened. Do not interrupt your prayer to take yourself to task, to upbraid yourself with your want of charity, to trace back the paths over which your thoughts had travelled involuntarily. All this is waste of time. A short act of contrition for the fault, if any, and then renewed application to your meditation would be more fruitful than these nursings of wounded self-love. If the distraction presents itself over and over again, act in the same way. You cannot help it if the devil throws his weeds into the garden ; but you can throw them out without wasting time in abusing the devil, the weeds, or yourself. There is nothing a proud soul feels so keenly as silent contempt ; and the devil, who is pride personified, generally retires when we adopt these tactics.

Prayer is a great weapon against temptation. It is given us by our Lord himself. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." If we prayed instantly, often the devil would withdraw at once, but because we neglect prayer, we fall. When we pray with humility, feeling our utter dependence on God, He never fails to aid us. St. Francis used to say, "Lord, help me to-day, or I shall betray Thee." Frequently our temptations may suggest subjects of prayer. In the example given it would be good sometimes to pray for the one with whom we are vexed. Holy Scripture points out occupation as a remedy when it tells us, "Idleness hath

taught me much evil." Busy people commit fewer faults than the indolent. The old proverb tells us that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." When we are busy we have no time to listen to the devil. Cheerfulness is also a great help to conquer temptation, whereas sadness is a fruitful source of sin. It opens the door to evil thoughts, jealousy, hatred and neglect of duty. If you are inclined to be sad, do as you would if you had to act a part. Pretend you are good tempered, act as though you were, and your sadness will soon be dissipated. Better still, work; take active exercise or perform some act of charity. Prayer *is not the* remedy for sadness, as a general rule

Sometimes, in order to chase away a temptation, it is sufficient to tell our confessor about it and to ask his advice. The devil loves to conceal his plans and, if discovered, takes flight; at least, he leaves us "for a time." He will come back with another temptation, which we can perhaps conquer in the same way. To speak of a temptation often requires courage. We imagine that it is something so dreadful, that no one else has ever had such a thought suggested to him. You cannot tell the priest anything that will surprise him. He knows most of the ills that flesh is heir to, and there is no temptation which one man has had that another may not experience. True humility is acquired by revealing our temptations and showing ourselves as we really are, no matter what it may cost us. After all, since temptations are not sins, we are simply making the devil's confession for him, and this should not be so difficult consider-

ing the number of times, we have rendered our neighbours, the same service.

When our Lord came down from Mount Thabor after His transfiguration He was met by a crowd of people, and a poor man came up to Jesus asking Him to deliver his son from the evil spirit. The Apostles had tried to drive out the devil, but had failed. They asked our Lord afterwards why the devil had not obeyed them. Jesus replied: "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." Our Lord gives us here a great means of conquering temptation. Mortification is a weapon against the devil. Are you harassed by temptation? Practise some little act of mortification to obtain the grace to conquer it. You may say, "What can I do?" Cannot you say an extra prayer, give an alms, refuse yourself some comfort, suffer some little inconvenience without complaining? These acts draw down God's blessing and obtain us special graces.

Vigilance is another great weapon against temptation. If a man expect some one to push against him; he holds firm and is not overthrown; but, if he be taken unexpectedly, probably he will fall. You may say: "How can we know what temptations the devil is about to send us? Certainly you cannot foresee all his arrows, but you can learn a great deal from experience. For example, at your last ball you gave way to vanity, imagining yourself to be the "belle of the ball." You did and said things merely to attract attention and took pleasure in the foolish compliments that were paid you; you rejoiced at

the thought of them for more than a week after. One need not be a prophet to foretell that, at your next ball, you will have the same temptation, and if you are obliged to go, you can, at least, make a good resolution to be more reserved and to be simple in your dress. Had you the courage to wear something unbecoming, or less becoming, you would very likely cut away the ground clean under the devil. But this is asking too much, you say! No, not if you are generous and in earnest about conquering your faults. To do this we must not be content to stand on the defensive, but the tactics of war exact that we take up the aggressive. A man was once travelling alone in the dreary region around Hudson Bay when he perceived a bear coming towards him, evidently with the intention of giving him a friendly hug in view of a future meal. The traveller saw his danger; moreover, he had no weapons. Suddenly the thought struck him, why not adopt the enemy's weapons? In an instant he dashed forward and hugged the bear with all his strength. Bruin, who, like some people, was apt to give what he would not take, strongly objected to being hugged; he turned tail and hurried away. It was a good stratagem. How often we could conquer temptations if we had the courage to "hug the bear." You are always snappish when asked to render some particular service. Offer to do it without being asked. You often stay in bed too long, get up a quarter of an hour earlier. You are tempted to be dainty, eat something you *do not* like; you hate having any of your things touched, offer to

lend them. If you look out you will find plenty of *bears to hug.* To be generous with God, to give without counting, puts an end to many a temptation. Look forward each morning at the temptations which may come ; note the persons places, or things that occasion them, and make a firm definite resolution. A vague resolution to do right will not help you, any more than it would profit a soldier to go to battle with a hazy idea that he has to fight a foe somewhere, but he neither knows the foe nor the place of combat ; you will not see such a man with a decoration, but you may get a distant view of his heels as he flies from the enemy. Where is your battlefield ? Is it at home during meals ? Is it at business ? Is it in the evening, during your recreations, or when you are with a friend ? We have all our battlefields if we are striving to serve God. The blind King John of Bohemia asked to be led to the Battle of Agincourt, to give one stroke at the enemy. His wish was granted ; the brave old monarch died in the battle, and his motto, "I serve," was adopted by the Black Prince. "I serve" should be our motto too. We serve God first of all, then we serve Mary that we may the better serve her Son. To be worthy children of such a Mother we must always be ready and anxious to strike a blow at Satan, the enemy of mankind. Temptation must needs come ; but God's grace is ever with us Our Captain is near, leading us into the field helping us to fight, watching us with pleasure as we try to win our spurs in the combat against the devil, the world and the flesh.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF TEMPTATION.

HOLY SCRIPTURE tells us, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," and gives as a reason for rejoicing in temptation, "that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." We must believe firmly that temptation is one of God's blessings in disguise. Notice how it reveals to us our own weakness and the enemy's stratagems. There is no teacher that equals experience; the young generally listen to no other. We learn our weakness and the enemy's strength at our own cost. Look at that poor drunkard staggering down the street, with a crowd of boys jeering at him. Was he always a drunkard? No: once he was a lad who hated intemperance; perhaps he often condemned those who fell into this sin and determined, in all sincerity, never to follow in their steps. But temptation came, he was laughed at for his abstinence from intoxicating liquors; and to prove, as he imagined, his bravery, though in reality he proved the contrary, he drained one glass, then another. Gradually the habit grew upon him; now he is a drunkard. What a terrible thing for his wife and children! He has learnt, to his cost, how great was his weakness.

There is another crowd gathering, what is the matter? It is a young woman who is being conducted to the police-station between two

policemen. A year ago she was an honest servant, who would have scorned the idea of committing a theft. She was good-looking, or, what is the same thing, thought herself very pretty. Temptation to vanity came, love of dress led to extravagance, and the wages did not rise in proportion to her foolish desire for finery. She incurred debts, then creditors worried her for payment, and to satisfy them, to use her own words, she *borrowed* a few pounds from her master without his knowledge. She fully meant to pay it back as soon as her wages were paid—but the theft was found out before the wages were due ; now she is branded as a thief, and disgraced for life.

Here is a young girl, a Catholic, who has just married a Protestant clandestinely at the registry office. Six months ago she would have deemed such a crime impossible, but her affections were won by a flatterer ; as the parents disapproved she continued the engagement in secret, using various devices to deceive them. At last she let herself be persuaded to take the final step, and now she has broken the heart of loving parents, and probably marred her whole future ; for how can a man be a good husband when he does not scruple to persuade a girl to deceive her parents? In the shipwreck of sobriety, justice, and truth, let us hope that experience was gained. We must remember that the devil, though fallen from his first estate, has all the intelligence of a mighty archangel. His ruses are countless, and man is, by himself, utterly incompetent to cope with him. Just as many a battle has been lost

because one side underrated the strength of the opposite side, so, in the spiritual life, we are prone to underrate the force of our bad inclinations and the power of the devil, and thus we fall. This is all the more dangerous when our faults are less visible. Sometime we hear of a girl being such a treasure : she is so good at home, she never gives trouble, she seems to have no faults. If this is the result of trying to do her duty for God's sake, if her virtue is real, it is a great blessing. The contrary is not infrequent—a girl seems outwardly good ; for a time all goes well, but her heart conceals grievous faults ; she is sly, selfish, self-concentrated, proud of her reputation, anxious to please, and cunning enough always to attain her own ends. Her parents are deceived by this exterior meek deportment, and if she be an only child it is a sad thing for her. A sister will find out the evil, but dares not whisper anything against the "favourite"; a brother ventures to say in boyish slang that "sneak" expresses his sentiments, he gets punished for his candour and keeps his opinions to himself in future. Meanwhile the evil grows, ready to burst forth when a strong temptation comes. Some day, perhaps, this model daughter will throw off her mask and astonish her parents by her obstinacy and pride. Such examples are, alas! only too common, and among those who are the most shocked and astounded at the contrast is the girl herself. Perhaps, now that the one thing she lived for, a spotless reputation, is gone, in despair she throws all appearance of virtue to the winds, and hurries on headlong to ruin.

Truly, temptation does not make us weak, but it shows us what we are. It makes us cautious how we walk. We are wise, if we profit by the proofs of our own weakness. It is a great guarantee against falling to be firmly convinced that there is no sin, however heinous, that a human being has committed, which we are not capable of committing but for the grace of God.

Solomon, the wisest of men, fell so low as to countenance idolatry, if he did not commit it. "Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall," is the natural conclusion we draw from these thoughts. Very often God allows temptation to assail us to punish us for past faults; we have run into the occasions of sin, we have contracted bad habits, now we have to undo the past. Thus a gambler has a terrible struggle to resist playing cards, and a drunkard has to practise total abstinence if he would keep sober. A daughter has acquired a bad habit of murmuring against her parents and answering them rudely. She goes to confession and determines to amend; but the bad habit is formed, and she will have many a fall before she can conquer herself. Take a girl who is in the habit of sulking. She will pass hours and days without speaking to those around, and all the time looks as black as a thundercloud. If she tries seriously to correct herself, it will cost heroic efforts to bring herself to break silence and be amiable. Her first efforts will probably only result in lessening the length of her sulky fits. We reap what we have sown; it is easier to build on a vacant site than to pull down

houses and rebuild. God lets us feel the effects of having sinned, and the force of habit exacts many sacrifices which enable us to expiate our faults.

There is another advantage we can reap from temptation. It strengthens our soul and helps us to acquire virtue. Virtue in Latin is of the feminine gender, and a spiritual writer has said: "There is nothing feminine about virtue except its gender." The very word indicates something virile or manly. How are we to get this virility? By practice. If we must wrestle with the devil, the world, and the flesh, we shall come out of the conflict strong and vigorous. We so often pray for a grace—take humility as an example. Our daily prayer is, "O my God, teach me to be humble." God hears our prayer and sends us, *not humility ready-made*, but *the materials* from which to make it; so we find that innumerable temptations to pride keep crossing our path. If conquered, they furnish the threads wherewith to weave for ourselves the garment of humility. Hence do not be surprised if God answers your prayer thus. Do not say, "Whenever I try to be humble I am sure to fall into more sins of pride than usual. I will not try again." Instead of this, when you have prayed for any particular virtue, expect to have more occasions of practising it. What would you think of a recruit who begged his captain to make a good soldier of him while, at the same time, he declined to go through any military exercises? Can you imagine a girl wishing to earn needlework, yet refusing to take a needle in hand? Perhaps you say, "But I offend

God, and that grieves me"; possibly you are grieved, but are there not a few grains of wounded self-love mixed with your contrition? You thought yourself strong, now you have experienced your weakness. Next time you will be less self-confident. Is not this true humility? Be sure that the day you make up your mind to be patient, obedient, or industrious, you will have plenty of occasions of practising it. These are rare virtues that must be acquired with the help of God's grace and constant effort. Learn also from your frequent failures to have pity for others. If we sincerely feel our own weakness, we shall not exact so much from our fellows.

St. James tells us how to regard temptation. "Count it *all joy* when you shall fall into divers temptations." A man rejoices when an opportunity presents itself of making a large fortune. Temptation helps us to make our fortune for Heaven. On our death-bed it is not the thought of the pleasures long past that will console us but the sacrifices we have made for God. Every temptation resisted, merits an eternal reward, which is laid up for us "in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

When a man has been through an apprenticeship, he knows his trade, he can train others. So those who have been tempted themselves gain experience which is useful to their fellows. Those who are called by God to help others are often subjected to severe trials. St. Jane Chantal experienced violent temptations for many years. She entered

religion, and was often called upon to help persons who went to her for advice in their spiritual difficulties. One day some one asked her if she was never at a loss what advice to give. The Saint replied, "No, for I have never yet been consulted about a temptation that I have not experienced myself." If it is a great merit to give a cup of cold water to a disciple for Jesus' sake, how much greater is it to give spiritual alms and to instruct the ignorant?

A word, in conclusion, on some mistaken notions that exist about temptation. Temptation is *not a sin*; our Divine Lord Himself was tempted, yet without sin. The greatest saints have had terrible temptations, which have contributed to their sanctification. Temptation may beset you, but they cannot sully the purity of your soul if you do not take pleasure in them—hence as long as you are fighting you are victorious. You may say, "I fear that I have consented, at least for a moment." In that case make *one* act of contrition, then be sure that God has forgiven you, and go on fighting bravely. Look at that soldier in the thick of the fight. His face and hands are begrimed with powder, his uniform is disarranged, he has a few scratches here and there; but he holds on, he is unconquered, his wounds are all *in front* and he is a brave fellow. Do you think less of him because he has a wound or two? Do they not prove that he has been hardly pressed and has fought bravely? Now look at that coward skulking in the tent; his uniform is clean and he has not a scratch. Do you admire him? No, you

despise such a man. He is unworthy of the name of a soldier.

So it is in the spiritual life; we may have committed a few sins of frailty inherent to human weakness, yet we bear the brunt of the battle, when we attack the foe bravely. Do not the acts of bravery more than compensate for little faults? The essential is not to give in, to stand on the breach and hold up the flag of duty. The Divine Captain watches the fight and prepares to crown the victor. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able. The "way of issue" is there, and we have grace to help in time of need. Many of our falls come from *fear* of temptation; a panic seizes us, and most of us have had more than one "Battle of the Spurs." We acted up to the conviction that:—

> He who fights and runs away,
> Lives to fight another day.

Flight is the means to conquer sins against faith or purity; but most other virtues have to be fought out in a hand-to-hand conflict. Thus while we face temptations which come in the path of duty, we must avoid running into danger when God does not call us to meet it. Falls are often the result of foolhardiness. Another dangerous practice is to reason with the devil, who is a far better logician than we are. We must never try to find excuses for committing this or that sin. The devil will supply them readily enough, but God will not accept them.

How long must we continue this warfare? As

long as life lasts; there are no holidays in the spiritual combat. If one temptation leaves us another comes. Just as no man has had occasion in his life of showing all he is capable of for good, so there are germs of evil which have never developed in him, because the conditions have not been favourable for their growth. This thought should make us humble, and as long as we are self-diffident there is no danger of falling. The danger is great when we are satisfied with our progress and full of self-confidence. One day we shall reap the fruit of our labours. After the "great tribulations" are over for us, and the struggle is ended which necessitated the washing of our soiled robes "in the blood of the Lamb," we shall stand victorious before God's throne and praise Him for ever. But we are not yet there. So *Forward! quick march!*

AFTER THE BATTLE.

THERE has been a great battle ; for hours the fight raged, both sides fought valiantly. Nevertheless, bravery does not exempt from wounds and even death. Now there is a lull ; one side has gained a decided advantage ; the enemy retires finding that in a lost cause "discretion is the better part of valour" ; hostilities cease, at least for a while. Nevertheless, it is not yet time for rest ; the dead must be buried, the wounded tended, breaches repaired, weapons examined, the dead despoiled. After the battle a wise general looks back on the combat, he calls to mind the enemy's stratagems, he sees how far his own tactics were useful and what modifications should have been made. In a word, he profits by the experience of the past to do better or as well in future. So in the incessant warfare of life sometimes there comes a deadly conflict. It may last for hours or days ; but as "violent fires soon burn out themselves," at last there comes a comparative calm. We have to hold ourselves on the defensive, but this is easier than the sharp struggle in the battlefield. Temptations attack us more fiercely on certain occasions than on others.

Let us suppose that a Child of Mary has just come from the battlefield of temptation ; she has

fought bravely in general, yet, in spite of her generous efforts, she knows that her soul is not free from sin. Now and then her courage has failed, or she was imprudent and so the enemy gained an advantage. Is all lost? No, decidedly not, much may be gained if we know how to utilise our falls. How is this to be done?

In the first place, we must not be surprised at them. There are many reasons why it is perfectly natural that we should fall. We have a weak fallen nature. By Adam's sin the "balance of powers" in our soul has been upset. The understanding no longer has the strength to impose obedience on the will which strongly rebels against authority, so we do things which we would not. We have the germs of the triple concupiscence in our soul. Our enemy is very powerful. If God did not restrain him he could crush poor sinful humanity as a giant crushes a fly. There are evil inclinations in our soul that we ignore; temptation calls these out and the results surprise us. All defects take time to conquer, it is a life-long warfare; is it astonishing that we fall? When we know ourselves well we shall wonder that we do not sin oftener and more grievously. When you were a child you had many a fall. Just think, what caused them? Was it a stumbling-block in the road, or because you were hurrying along too heedlessly or too fast; or were you tired out? In the spiritual life all these causes may account for our falls. Often they come from running too fast; from trying to do more than our strength permits.

An example will explain this. Here is a Child of Mary who has made up her mind to fast: she has not yet come to the age for fasting, but considers herself strong and means to try. No one must know. She begins Lent fervently and manages to conceal her acts of mortification. But this girl has a hard day's work to do; she earns her daily bread, and works with others in a large establishment. After a few days the fasting begins to tell on her. She does not feel hungry, but she does feel excessively irritable and impatient. She loses her temper for the least thing. It never occurs to her to connect this with fasting. Yet it is probably a natural consequence. She has over-estimated her bodily strength which is not equal to bearing both fasting and hard work. The nerves get the upper hand, and her irritability is the natural result. How does our Child of Mary behave? She grumbles at herself, sees the absurdity of performing works of supererogation when she cannot keep the precepts of God; but she does not see that her falls come from an excess of good will, that it would be better to walk in the beaten path, eat bread and butter for breakfast, and keep her temper. Moreover, she never thought of asking her confessor's advice before taking a resolution of this kind. Her failure, if she profits by it, will teach her obedience, prudence and humility, virtues which are not to be despised.

What gardener ever was astonished at seeing weeds spring up in a garden? Grow they will, and he has to take patience and uproot them as fast as they appear. In the spiritual life the best way to

prevent their growth is to plant virtues in the place of the weeds, and this is done by cultivating good habits. Hence, do not show your ignorance by being astonished at having fallen. It would be more natural to wonder that we do not fall oftener.

Another rule after a fault is to avoid *sadness*. "What! may I not be sad when I have broken my resolutions and offended God?" That depends on what meaning you attach to the word "sadness." If sadness, for you, means uneasiness, inactivity, anger against yourself, impatience, or discouragement, then certainly you may not give way to it. Sorrow is the best word for the regret which we ought to feel after a fault. There is a good sorrow and a bad sorrow. The former comes from God and the latter from the devil, or wounded self-love. "By their fruits you shall know them," applies to these different kinds of sorrow. In the prodigal's elder brother, whose "countenance fell" because he was jealous, we have an example of sorrow arising from self-love. Judas' sorrow came from the devil, since it urged him on to destruction. Mary Magdalene repented and her sorrow led her to a holy life. When God reproaches those who are trying to serve Him, He ever speaks peace, as Jesus did in His mortal life. Excessive sadness that disquiets the soul, makes it fear, disinclined for prayer, deprives it of energy, and keeps it from the Sacraments, does not come from God. Some people, even when they have confessed their fault, are still troubled, and *though God has forgiven them, they cannot forgive themselves*. Poor self-love! how it likes to make itself interesting,

to envelop itself in a mantle of melancholy and to nurse its grief.

How much more profitable it would be to repent calmly and sincerely. Trouble and agitation do not come from God, Who dwelleth "not in the earthquake," nor "in the wind." St. Francis of Sales tells us that after a sin, when our soul is sad, we should be gentle, and encourage ourselves to begin again. Such conduct shows true humility. The common complaints, "I shall never get on, I am always sinning. What a wretched creature I am! What is the use of trying?" are all worse than useless. It would be better to ask forgiveness calmly and then go on our way as if nothing had happened, convinced that God has forgiven His erring child. An example will make this clearer. Suppose a little girl has committed a deliberate fault. Afterwards she is really sorry and begs pardon. Her mother forgives her and tells her to go and play with her companions. The child, instead of obeying, sits sobbing in the corner. The mother asks what new cause of grief she has. The child replies: "I am afraid you have not forgiven me." The mother reassures her child, bidding her think no more about it. How grieved the mother would be if the child still refused to be comforted, and remained *for days and even weeks in this state of mind.* This is exactly what many people do instead of glorifying God by believing His Word.

An army that is discouraged is lost. In the Hundred Years' War the French had plenty of good soldiers. How was it that Henry V. gained

such easy victories. Circumstances, no doubt, favoured him; but one reason was that the French soldiers were disheartened. When Joan of Arc came forward their courage revived, and they re-conquered their own. Hope is like a golden chain let down from Heaven for us to grasp. It is strange how, while we reproach ourselves for sins against faith and charity, we seem to think so little of sins against hope. It does not occur to us that distrust of God is a sin. The devil whispers that we are not good enough to go to the Sacraments. Not good enough! Who is? When shall we be good enough? Never. Holy Communion is not a reward of holiness, but a means of arriving at it for those who are earnestly trying to conquer self.

Another objection crops up. "It is no use going to confession, I am no better after." It is already a gain that you are not worse. If, by frequenting the Sacrament of Penance with a good will to do better we are still so imperfect, what should we be if we neglected this means of grace? We must learn not to worry wilfully over a fault which we have confessed with sorrow. But one scrupulous Child of Mary objects: "If only I knew that my sorrow were real I should not worry; it is this doubt which torments me." Do you wish to be sorry, have you asked God for contrition? "Yes, over and over again." Then believe His promises rather than your doubts and feelings. Put away all these sad thoughts; you had better repair the past by doing better than muse in this doleful way on your imperfections. You have plenty of faults,

it is true, more than you think ; therefore do not add to the number by distrusting God.

We are advancing on the high road when we accept the humiliation of having fallen. Common sense (perhaps it should be called *uncommon*) helps us in the spiritual life as well as in wordly affairs. Do you expect to live without ever offending God ? Since we know that even the "just man falls," why not accept the inevitable, while striving to reduce our faults to a minimum.

When we see a flash of lightning we begin to count in order to know how far off the storm is and by the time which elapses between the flash and the thunder-clap we can gauge the distance. In the spiritual life we like to know how far we are on the road to Heaven. Many proofs of progress can be given, but one very sure test is—How much time elapses between a sinful action and the act of contrition ? Sometimes a Child of Mary commits a fault at nine a.m. and at nine p.m. she has not yet asked forgiveness of God. She has abused herself, worried and sulked, but none of these are sacramentals. They have only increased the fault. When the act of contrition follows a fault instantaneously, then we are nearing the goal of holiness. The Saints were always so calm in their sorrow. When once your act of contrition has been well made, think no more of your fault, except as an incentive to generosity, until your next confession. Here perhaps an objection occurs to you. Ought we not frequently to think of and mourn for the sins we have committed so many times in our lives ? Yes, we should have an abiding sorrow for sin, for we

have committed far more than we can remember; therefore, with David, it is a good practice to ask God to cleanse us from secret sins and to keep them ever before us; but this should be done in a spirit of thanksgiving. "What shall I render to God for all His benefits?" This remembrance of our sins makes us more fervent in His service. Mourn for them by all means, but with a "sorrow unto God." A spiritual writer has said that we should mourn over our past sins as we sorrow for our dead. We kneel at their graves, but we do not disinter our loved ones. In like manner bury your sins in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and mourn for them collectively. One last consoling thought comes. We have a Mother in Heaven, to whom we can have recourse both after a fall and to keep us from falling. Invoke Mary, the Refuge of Sinners; she will not suffer your prayer to remain unanswered, for "the true Child of Mary shall never perish."

We have spent a few moments together on the field after the battle. Has it taught you anything? Have you made any of the mistakes which have been pointed out? Do you see your error now? Then one course remains, you must take a generous resolution to fall as seldom as possible, to rise immediately and to profit fully by the fault. Just as a spot on a beautiful dress may be covered by a rich embroidery, and then the garment becomes more valuable, so God, in His infinite wisdom, can bring good out of evil. The great thing is to be watchful and trustful, and to go our way, "forgetting the things that are behind, and looking forward."

ON CONFESSION.

It is a great thing to know our besetting sin and to watch against it; but all our efforts, without the grace of God would avail little. We are weak, too weak by ourselves, to fulfil our good resolutions. Whence are we to get strength? In the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. These are the great sources of strength. Penance is instituted to heal the wounds of sin, and Holy Communion is the food of our soul. All Catholics who wish to lead a pious life receive these Sacraments more frequently than once a year, which is the least they can do. Monthly confession and Communion is a very general rule among the Children of Mary; there are many also whose practice it is to confess weekly. When we do a thing frequently it is apt to degenerate into routine; this holds good even of spiritual exercises, so it is well to reanimate our faith from time to time and to bestir ourselves, lest routine rob our spiritual life of vitality. What a wonderful gift is Penance! How marvellously God has adapted it to the needs of the human heart! We are weak and sorrow-stricken, laden with the burden of sin, and God bids us take that burden to Him, not through the ministry of an angel, who could not feel for our infirmities, but through the ministry of a priest

who like ourselves, knows what it is to be tempted. In the course of ages how many souls have owed their salvation to this Sacrament! What would the lost souls give if a priest might be sent to hear their confession? Confession, rightly used, is a great means of sanctification, even for those who are not guilty of mortal sin; but if we are to benefit fully by this means of grace it is essential that we prepare carefully, and in addition there are certain mistakes as regards confession which must be avoided.

Let us begin by the preparation. It is Saturday, and you are going to confession. Choose your time well. If you are free to go when you please, do not put it off till the last moment: often a priest waits for an hour in an empty church in the early part of the evening; then, later on, crowds of people come together. Some cannot get there earlier; but many could with a little inconvenience, and thus do a charitable action for the priest, who need not remain so late in the confessional, and for the poor, whose time is precious and who cannot, perhaps, leave their children so long alone. Another caution is necessary. Always be honest about taking your right place. Sometimes well-dressed people come into church; a good number of people are already waiting for confession; they pass on and take one of the first places, quietly ignoring the rights of others to take precedence. To say the least, it is uncharitable, and does not edify; it would be more humble to wait for your turn. "O, I hate waiting for confession!" is your reply. So do other people; but if you have a deep

sorrow for sin you will not object to making a little act of mortification. If you really cannot stay ask some one to kindly allow you to pass, but do not suppose the permission. Now these preliminaries are settled, you are in your *right* place, and begin to make your preparation. How are you to set about it? "It is simple enough," you say; "open your book and read through the preparation for confession." One minute, please. In what does the preparation for confession consist? Have you a clear notion of the five distinct parts, namely, (1) the prayer for grace to know and confess our faults, (2) the examination of conscience, (3) contrition and resolution of amendment, (4) confession, (5) satisfaction? We will go through them in turn, for each of these points will claim our attention, not one can be omitted.

First comes the prayer for help. Holy Scripture bids us prepare ourselves for prayer. You have hurried from your home and walked down quickly to church. Stop a minute to calm yourself; leave your book alone; kneel silently, and try to realise that you are in the presence of the Good Shepherd; make an act of adoration; ask for help in your own words, and try to throw all the intensity of your soul into your petition. It is a great help in examining our conscience to realise that we are in the presence of our Saviour and our Judge. The fruit we gather from our confession depends largely on this prayer being well said. We need God's light to penetrate into the inmost recesses of our soul; it is too dark there for us to see clearly.

Self-love would blind us, we find excuses so naturally, and are so ingenious in finding periphrases for certain sins that humiliate us. How a ray of sunshine, lighting up the room, renders the dust visible. Look at the thousand specks floating in the path of the ray. They are everywhere else also, but we do not perceive them. Have you ever had a serious illness? If so, perhaps you have found that it had the effect of a ray of light showing you the past, and revealing you to yourself. Frequently we need a special grace to confess a fault that humbles us exceedingly; in such cases the devil is apt to make restitution, and give back the shame of which he robbed us when we committed the fault. Yet, if we perceive in the light of God the heinousness of sin, we shall not shrink from owning the truth. A short mental prayer of preparation thus made is worth pages of prepared forms recited coldly, for the former just suits your needs. You should cultivate the habit of kneeling close to our Lord and talking with Him in all simplicity. The Saints were so simple and yet so reverent in their dealings with our dear Lord.

Pass on now to the second part, the examination of conscience. Here break up the matter into duties towards God, your neighbour, and yourself; with this second part come the duties of your state of life. Begin by the first point and see if you have said your prayers and how you have said them. Examine your conduct at church; do not ask yourself simply if you have been to Mass on Sundays, but examine whether you prayed

during holy Mass. See if you have kept the laws of the Church as regards abstinence and fasting. Then ask yourself if you have been prudent as regards your faith, if you have stood up bravely for your religion ; most sins against faith, hope and charity must be examined here, yet you need not take the long list of questions on the first three commandments, if you confess frequently. From the duty to God pass on to examine your conduct to your superiors—parents and employers ; equals —brothers, sisters, friends, acquaintances; inferiors —those over whom you are placed. We must see how we practise obedience. fidelity to our work, good example, charity in *thought*, word, and deed. Many forget to examine themselves on their thoughts, or to confess the sins which they did not commit because they had not the occasion. Thus, to intend to annoy a person and to fail in the design because the person gets out of our way, renders us as guilty as if we had succeeded.

We frequently forget to examine how many duties we have *neglected.* A short form of examination may help you here: use one if you feel the necessity. Next comes the duty towards ourselves. Here we see how we have spent our time, if we have been trying to subdue the ruling passion ; whether selfishness, jealousy, laziness, vanity, daintiness, etc., have been getting victories over us. These remarks are merely suggestive, as each Child of Mary ought to know her special foes and to be on her watch against them. The essential, in examining our conscience, is to see things as they are ; to be brave enough to look

our faults in the face and to call them by their right names. In Confession learn "to call a spade a spade." Some girls take a dislike to their name: for example, an Eliza finds such a name common-place, so it becomes Elsie or Elisa. Now people sometimes do the same with their sins; they try to give a better sounding word than "pride" or "temper," so we hear of them having had wounded feelings, or having taught such a one to keep her place. This is a distinction without a difference. We must be careful to mention circumstances that aggravate the guilt of a sin; even though it be not strictly necessary, it is a good act of humility. Thus one girl may have sulked for a few hours, another for a week; yet both might accuse themselves simply of having sulked, and if the latter had the courage to mention the length of time as well as the sin she would certainly have gained in humility. It is a great thing to keep before our minds those words of the *Confiteor*, "I confess to God"; it would help us to be frank even when the truth humbles us. Surely we ought to feel the need of humbling ourselves as an expiation for our sin.

Having finished the examination just reflect for a moment on the cause of your faults; you will generally find one or two sources, rarely more. These indicate the ruling passion or the twin ruling passions, and so help us to know ourselves. Thus at the root of the sins of disobedience, jealousy, temper, impertinence, a proud girl will find wounded pride, whereas

a lazy girl would perceive indolence running through each. One great thought which will help us to be sincere is that each confession may be the last ; in any case it is one gone out of the number God has fore-ordained to grant us, and we shall have to render an account of all the graces we have received.

In our examination we must guard against other dangers besides flattering ourselves. We should avoid hurrying ; neither must we take too long, as this is apt to confuse us. Most priests recommend ten minutes or a quarter of an hour's preparation for those who confess frequently. We should further guard against taking the world's standard as to what is right and wrong. We, as Catholics, are to be guided by Christ's law ; and the common excuse, "Everybody does it," does not justisfy us in going against our conscience or disobeying the laws of the Church.

Having examined our conscience we must know what we have to say, and note exactly what sins we have to confess against God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Then it is time to occupy ourselves with contrition, and this includes hatred of past sins and a firm resolution to avoid them in future. This sorrow for sin is a gift of God ? we must not imagine that we can work ourselves up to feeling great sorrow. It is enough that we pray for it and desire it, for such sorrow may lie "too deep for tears." nor are they necessary. The sorrow we feel for having offended God, and that which we feel for the loss of a friend, do not affect us in the same way. The latter appeals more to our senses,

the former is more spiritual. Thus a girl may cry over a book, and feel very cold and dry spiritually when she goes to confession. Does this prove that she has really more sorrow for an imaginary hero's trials than for having offended God? The question seems absurd. Yet there are some girls who try to measure their sorrow in this way. We should desire contrition, pray for it, and excite ourselves to it by meditation on Our Lord's passion and death, or on the last judgment, and then rest contented when we have done our best. The surest proof of contrition is the firmness of our purpose of amendment. This resolution should be definite; we should examine the occasions that led us into sin, and take means to avoid these snares in future. We cannot avoid all the occasions of sin, but we are bound to avoid the proximate occasions.

The fact that we generally have the same sins to confess weekly does not prove that our contrition is insincere. It merely proves that we have a ruling passion against which we have always to struggle; if we did not confess frequently it would master us and lead to greater sins. Thus, a girl with a weak character may have to accuse herself of having been ashamed of her religion; if she were not a practical Catholic she would have denied it. An indolent girl may accuse herself of having been late for Mass on Sunday; were she not in the habit of confessing frequently she would doubtless have missed Mass. Another has to confess bad temper, who, left to herself, would be guilty of revenge. Thus we see that confession

helps to keep these passions curbed. We are not surprised that a certain bodily ailment reappears. We are subject to these attacks, it is our weak side, and with all our care we cannot cure it entirely ; so it is with our spiritual ailments.

You have made your preparation, you know your sins, so in all simplicity make your confession to God. Place yourself in His presence ; tell Him simply and sorrowfully how foolish and guilty you have been, and then throw all the earnestness of your soul into the act of contrition. When you are in the confessional try to keep this thought still before you : "I confess to God." Make your confession briefly and clearly. Listen to the advice the priest gives, and receive the absolution kneeling in spirit at the foot of the Cross. Do not fall into the common error of judging of the goodness of your confession by its length. You may be ten minutes in the confessional, but if you are merely striving to render yourself interesting it will not profit your soul much. Remember you go to confession to get absolution ; that is the essential point. You may require help ; if so, explain your difficulty and abide by the decision of your confessor. It is a good practice to keep to the same confessor, and not to go from one to another. Do not look upon confession as a mere conversation. Perform your penance as soon as possible, and, in addition, make your thanksgiving after confession. Ask for strength to keep your resolution, determine precisely what you propose and what you are resolved to avoid. Finish by a little visit to our

Lady's altar, that she may obtain the necessary graces for you.

One more word of warning. Always speak with reverence of the Sacrament and of God's ministers. It pains us when we hear a girl exclaim, "What a bother, I have to go to confession." This is not the way to speak of a Sacrament purchased for us by the precious Blood of Christ. If we had some material advantage to obtain we should not speak thus. Worldlings do not look upon going to receive a sum of money as a "bother." Doubtless the girl who uses this word does not mean what she says. In that case why say it? It does not edify, and shows thoughtlessness to say the least. All that concerns the Sacraments merits respect; we should remember this in conversation and avoid conversing in a flippant, irreverent way of the Sacrament, or on what we have been told. The priest's advice is *personal*, and we should never tell our friends what he has advised us in confession, unless charity or duty authorise us.

A friendly caution, in conclusion, to those who are tempted to come away from confession discouraged, feeling that it is no use trying, that they are always falling, and therefore it would be better for them to confess less frequently. The first answer to this objection is that it is one of the devil's tactics to make people discouraged as a preliminary step to leading them into sin. When you have been to confession your soul has been purified and strengthened. You may not feel it, but there are many other things you cannot per-

ceive with your feelings. You must take it on faith. Moreover, you have a good will to serve God and do right. The devil is not best pleased, for he argues that he is likely to be defeated, he makes his plans in consequence. It is not the moment to attack you with a temptation to commit some glaring fault so he chooses discouragement; he would persuade you that you are sure to fall, and that it is too difficult to persevere. Be on your guard against this sadness which sometimes inundates the soul after confession. Trust in God and His strength, and do not count on self. Another answer is, of course you will fall, you do not surely imagine you will never need confession again. It is sufficient when you go to confession that you are determined to avoid sin. At that moment you must mean the words you repeat so often: "I will never sin again." This is not a *vow*, but a *promise* not to sin deliberately. If only you manage to keep your head above water, and to struggle on, in spite of bad examples and fierce temptation, is not this a fruit of confession? You might as well complain that you take food daily and do not feel stronger. If you keep up and get through your daily work, is not the strength derived from your food? If it only repairs the losses surely this is the essential! It is a great gain when we learn to be as reasonable in our spiritual affairs as we are in our worldly business. Therefore, continue to profit by your confessions, be as earnest as you can, and you will always derive benefit from the Sacrament which our Lord has instituted as a Sacrament of "peace to men of good will."

EMMANUEL.

What a busy scene meets our gaze as we stand outside one of our large railway stations! There is the terminus with its crowd of passengers; look at the countless vehicles—omnibuses, cabs, carts, and waggons—which pass hourly. How many hundreds of people are rushing along, intent on business. If it be dinner-time, they are hurrying to the restaurants. Numbers of newspaper boys, flower girls and fruit vendors, outvie each other in their efforts to gain a living.

Here is a large building, it is a public hospital. A crowd of afflicted persons throng at the gate anxiously striving to get in. All is life, bustle, activity. No one seems to have a moment to spare. Meanwhile the hands of the large station clock pursue their relentless course, as though mocking at the crowd of human beings who would fain outwit time. Few pass without glancing up at the clock, which frequently gives to many the unwelcome news that they are "behind time." Does it not seem as though all this motley throng was having a race with time, and ever losing in the course?

All this and more is visible to the human eye, we see the thronged streets, the different types of humanity as they speed along. Here it is a mil-

lionare, there a struggling bread-winner; now a votary of fashion passes her way, followed perhaps, by an outcast of society, homeless and in rags. Look at that poor widow, bent under the weight of a heavy burden; her pale face tells its story of care and sorrow. Now we pass a group of squalid children who are eagerly devouring some scraps of food. Another crowd of children gathers near a school: these little ones are poor, for the most part miserably clad, yet they possess a priceless treasure—the one true Faith. The Sisters of Mercy approach; the little faces brighten up as the good nuns appear on the scene. The school doors are opened and the children enter to pass a few happy hours.

As we gaze on these scenes of busy life the thought comes: What shall we say about the invisible world? How many Guardian Angels are present, each protecting the human being committed to his charge! Who can realise the joys and sorrows of these heavenly messengers, if we may speak of them in our human way? Then there are the multitudes of evil spirits, toiling incessantly, tempting some by positive evil and alluring others with a gilded bait.

Step aside for a few moments; enter the nearest Catholic church. All is hushed; as the beautiful picture of the Crucifixion behind the altar meets your eye, it reminds you of the love of Jesus and there, in the tabernacle, is our Emmanuel. A few worshippers are kneeling in silent prayer while hundreds pass the church, without perhaps, a thought of God or of their soul. All the

time Jesus waits for the homage of His people and pours precious blessings around. The words of St. John the Baptist might be appropriately placed over the portal of this church, for there, too, stands "One in the midst of you, whom ye know not."

We believe in the Real Presence, we know our Emmanuel is with us, yet how little we act up to our belief. If Jesus condescends to dwell among us, if He wills to place His tabernacle in our midst, clearly we have special duties to perform in honour of our dear Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar.

These duties are *to visit* Him and *to receive* Holy Communion with devotion.

Why should not every Christian, much more every Child of Mary, make it a practice to visit our Lord frequently, daily, if possible, in the Blessed Sacrament? "The Master is come and calls for thee." He expects something from us, and He has graces to bestow in return. What does He expect? An act of homage, a few moments, taken from our work or pleasure, spent at His feet. These shall not go unrewarded, for if a special blessing is awarded to those who visit a prisoner, how much more shall the Catholic be blessed who visits Jesus in His voluntary imprisonment, where He dwells for love of us. Hence a Child of Mary will endeavour to pay a daily visit to the tabernacle. There the Master waits, His human regard falls on us as we enter and that Divine regard is always accompanied by a grace.

Here are two girls who were once friends, own they are not on speaking terms. What has hap-

pened? The cause of offence is that one passed her friend's house without going in or even looking up to see if she were at the window. This is construed as a want of affection and an unkind action. How often has our Lord to complain of Catholics who pass and do not so much as think of the Friend Who is ever watching in the tabernacle. He is always "at home" for us whenever we please. A short visit from a loving soul, a fervent act of reparation for the forgetfulness of others console the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It is a great help in the Christian life when we have learnt to take our joys and sorrows to our Emmanuel. When we make a visit we should speak to Him heart to heart. A prayer-book is good only, when we cannot find words of our own. Sometimes our Lord has something to say to us. Give Him time to speak, listen to His words. As you kneel in silence, like Mary at the Master's feet, a good thought comes into your mind, something you can do to show your love for Him, or it may be a gentle reproach for a recent fault, or an inspiration to pray for some one. You will always leave the church strengthened and consoled, for Jesus will not let us go away empty.

Besides the visits to the altar, there are times when we receive our Divine Lord as the food of our soul. As far as possible, we should have a definite time and a definite day. So often we hear persons say, "I forgot it was my Communion Sunday." "Forgot!" indeed. If they are in the habit of receiving a pension monthly they never forget "pension day." They never forget that

Friday is the day they receive their weekly wages or their pocket-money. These things are always remembered. An earnest Child of Mary does not forget to receive our dear Lord, she longs for the day to come round, and Holy Communion will benefit such a soul, provided she is making serious efforts to amend her life.

Frequent Communion is an inestimable blessing to those who make a good preparation. This does not exclude faults of frailty ; but it does exclude deliberate faults, such as remaining voluntarily in a bad temper for hours and days together, keeping up a quarrel and refusing to make friends. Surely such acts are no preparation for next Communion day, nor are they a thanksgiving for the last. Some girls are inclined to imitate their companions and go to Communion, not because they have a great desire, but because they see others do so. The confessor is the one who has to decide how often we ought to approach the altar, and we may not presume to go without his permission.

Suppose that we are in earnest as regards our Communion. In what then does the preparation consist ? There is the remote preparation and the proximate. The remote consists in trying to lead a good life and to give edification. Frequent communion and a life of worldliness are incompatible Generally, confession is part of the proximate prerparation. After confession be careful to keep from any little sins and, if you fall, make a sincere act of contrition. The next morning make a point of being early at Mass. You can spend all the time in making your preparation or follow the Mass as

far as the Consecration, and then make your private preparation. The devotions found in our prayer-books are good. It is well to vary these devotions from time to time for fear of routine. Whatever *prayers* we use, we must take care that they are prayers, and not mere forms. It is a good habit to say them slowly in order to grasp their meaning. As the moment of Communion draws near let your attention be entirely concentrated on our dear Lord. Notice how the Church prepares her children. There is the public preparation of the *Confiteor*, followed by the priest's absolution. Then the Church bids the priest present the Host for our adoration, and the act of humility is repeated thrice. We confess our unworthiness, yet we approach, because our Lord calls us.

Then comes our thanksgiving. When the Ceylon divers descend to the bottom of the ocean seeking pearls, they do not lose a second. All their desire is to get as many as possible, since they can only remain a short time under water, and pearls are very precious. After Communion we possess Jesus. He is ours and we can obtain all graces from Him. We must profit by the occasion. We should begin our thanksgiving by a fervent act of adoration. The acts of love and thanksgiving should follow, and all this is better without a book. If we can speak heart to heart with Jesus, why take a book? It is good however to use some manual of devotion when we find distractions troubling us.

Prayer for others and for ourselves should also form part of our thanksgiving, and the souls in pur-

gatory must not be forgotten. It is a good habit to finish with the indulgenced prayer before a crucifix. All this can be done without spiritual consolation. If we feel dry and wooden we can take our book, read the prayers slowly and try to mean them. God does not ask for more and He is satisfied with our good will. Often, when we have had to struggle against dryness and distractions, we have profited more by our Communion than if we had had spiritual consolation. The thought of our Communion should follow us throughout the day. The tongue on which Jesus has reposed must not sting our neighbour; the heart that has received Him must not harbour uncharitable thoughts for, in coming to us, He wills to sanctify our whole being. What a wonderful gift we have in Holy Communion! Just try to imagine for a moment what the world would be like without the Blessed Sacrament. It would seem one vast desert; we feel as if we could not live in it.

If we realise in any degree what the Blessed Sacrament is, we shall assist at Benediction even when it involves a sacrifice. We do not want to give God that which costs us nothing. It is sad to see the churches so empty on week evenings. Some must stay at home, but *all* need not; if those, who could attend, did so, the churches would be crowded. The same holds good when there is a day of Exposition, and yet so often there are only two or three people in the church. At any rate, whatever others do, the Children of Mary will gather round our dear Lord, like Mary, their Mother, they will stand by Jesus when He is forsaken by so

many of His disciples. They will be zealous for the glory of His temple and altar, and count it a privilege to minister to Him as the holy women did of old. Thus the blessing promised by our Lord to St. Thomas will be theirs: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

ON VIGILANCE.

ALL nature is hushed in silence, as in the stillness of night, in the lonely Garden of Gethsemane, the God of nature is in agony beneath the load of our sins. Presently He rises, seeks His disciples, whom He finds asleep and utters these touching words: "Could ye not watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." How often Jesus had repeated this lesson to His disciples! By precept and parable, over and over again, the duty of watchfulness was inculcated by our dear Lord. The Apostles echoed His Divine warnings to their disciples. St. Peter bids his converts "be sober and watch, because the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." St. Paul takes up the same thought when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, do manfully and be strengthened." Here we have the double duty of passive and active resistance, and watching implies both. Men watch when they expect an attack, when they fear a danger. As Christians we are ever in danger, from our own weakness or the devil's snares. We do not always realise how weak we are; yet, if we examine the past, how many falls we have had and precisely just when we meant to do well. It is not all to propose to do

what is right, for often we are betrayed by our weak will. Just as a person who is not strong falls sometimes from sheer fatigue and want of strength, so in spite of a good will we have often fallen.

Then we must be on our guard against the snares of the devil. To some he comes with the temptation to give dangerous liberties to their senses: he urges them to take their ease, to give themselves every satisfaction, to indulge their curiosity, and satisfy their inordinate craving for affection. Another time he tempts by the coarse sensational literature of our day. Little by little false ideas take possession of the mind, doubts against faith are deliberately indulged in and inevitably religion is renounced. Evil counsellors are another of the devil's snares, and here weak characters are generally the victims. Love of money ruins thousands, and among the victims we find poor girls whose income was limited to £20 a year. How many a girl gives up a comfortable situation, where she could fulfil her religious duties, though she was not receiving high wages; she hears of something more advantageous, the salary is £2 a year more. It is true that she cannot go to Mass and will be exposed to other dangers. but the extra £2 tempts her. She does not "reckon the charges" but goes blindly on, accepts the higher wages, and consents to live in a state of mortal sin. Yet, had any one proposed to her to sell her soul to the devil for £2 she would have been horrified; but practically she has preferred a paltry sum of money to her spiritual well-being.

Again, a girl has two offers of marriage; she can choose between marrying a Catholic in a fairly comfortable position, or a wealthy Protestant. The prospect of wealth tempts her and she risks her temporal and eternal happiness for lucre's sake.

For many a young girl, dress is the great temptation, because it is necessary that we should keep up a certain position, and the difficulty is to fix the limit. St. Francis of Sales was once consulted by a lady on this subject. He replied: "Never be the first to adopt a fashion, nor the last to leave it off"; in a word, do not make yourself conspicuous. Naturally, when a girl buys a dress there is no harm in choosing a colour that suits her; but once the dress is purchased there is no necessity to think about it all the time she wears it. To aim at attracting attention, to desire to be admired, and to delight in these flatteries, is a slippery path to tread. Love of dress leads to dangerous amusements, for if girls have fine clothes they like them to be seen, and take means to attain their end. How sad it is to see such specimens of vanity. Look at the tortures they will suffer in order to have small feet and waspish waists. Here is a terrible example of what vanity may lead to. A young lady was out on business; she was dressed in the latest fashion, and entered a tram in the city. Presently she fell heavily against the person next to her. The tram was stopped, but, before she could be carried into a chemist's shop, she expired. An inquest was held, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from tight lacing." Certainly, that girl little thought when she

began to indulge her vanity where it would lead her. It is by such small beginnings and heedlessness that the devil entraps so many in his snares. Dangerous pleasures, some grosser, some more refined, ruin thousands. Little by little the sense of duty and honour gets blunted, and finally the devil triumphs.

These are a few of the devil's snares against which we must watch. Sleeping is the opposite of watching; and the Christian sleeps when he neglects prayer, when he leads a purely natural life, without rising above nature and thinking of God and his soul. He sleeps when he is satisfied with himself and considers himself secure from danger. Each day brings its sum of joys and sorrows, each day has its temptations, and we must be on our guard, we must expect and prepare for them. The devil never sleeps, he is ever active, and so we must ever be on the alert.

Yet watching alone is not sufficient, for to watch and take flight, would avail little. St. Paul traces out a line of conduct for us very clearly; the next step to watching is to "stand fast in the Faith." It is often very hard to stand up for God, His Vicar, and His Church. Take the example of a girl who is employed in a large establishment: she dines there daily, and fifty of the saleswomen sit down together to dinner. Lent comes with its extra days of abstinence, for she is dispensed from fasting we suppose. Each time she will have to brave the sneers of her companions; even if they say nothing, their looks will express their feelings. To go on being faithful to God under these circumstances requires great courage. If she be faithful

she will live it down and be respected for her fidelity to duty ; but how many plead that they must eat something, and thus dispense themselves from the Church's laws. To stand fast to our duty when we have to go against the stream of public opinion, to show our colours in the face of the foe is not easy ; yet if we love God we shall not falter.

We must stand fast when God tries us by affliction. Like Job, we must learn to receive good and evil from the hand of God. Poverty or bad health may overtake us, friends may fail us; yet God gave all these, and He has the right to take them. If you throw a stone at a dog, he will run after the stone ; he does not attack the one who throws it. We do the same ; we say, "It is that person who has caused me this difficulty." Yet, that person may have done so ; and further let us suppose that he did it out of sheer malice Yet faith teaches us that no evil can touch us without God's permission, so this trouble was permitted by our Heavenly Father for our greater good. In the "Life of Monseigneur de Ségur the Blind Apostle," we are told that for months he felt his eyesight failing him. The oculist had warned him that he was going gradually blind Little by little he grew worse ; at last one day the veil fell on his sight, that veil which was only to be removed when his spirit passed hence. He was sitting at the dinner-table when he perceived that he was totally blind. He made no remark ; his sacrifice had long been made, and when the cross came he was prepared. No one

noticed anything till, when dinner was over, he stumbled as he was trying to leave the room. What an heroic act of virtue!

Sometimes duty calls us to stand fast and displease those who are dearest to us. How much converts frequently have to suffer for their Faith! To become a Catholic often means banishment from home and friends, it may mean turning out in the world to earn our living; or perhaps a Child of Mary has a religious vocation, she is old enough to choose for herself, her parents do not need her help, and she feels that God is calling her. Such a sacrifice is heroic and if God asks it he will give the grace to leave father and mother for His sake; but this is more than standing fast, this is to "do manfully."

We do not pray merely for the pleasure it gives us, but because it is a sacred duty. There are moments when prayer seems almost impossible; yet we have our Divine Model, Who being in an agony prayed. Another time we have to go forward, to be the first to apologise. Few people like "humble pie," they find it difficult to digest; yet if we are brave enough to conquer our repugnance, it will prove beneficial to our souls. Attacking a disagreeable duty energetically, making acts of the opposite virtue when tempted, are acts of manliness. Sometimes God gives the devil leave to harass us with temptations, they weary us incessantly: we hear St. Paul speaking about beseeching God "thrice" that a temptation might be removed, and we think how many months and years we have been praying for relief.

God gives strength to bear it, but leaves the temptation. Bravely borne it will help to make saints of us; what more can we desire?

God by His Providence puts heavy burdens on His servants. They are called to undertake difficult things for Him. Here it is a poor woman left with a family of children to bring up. If she will consent to their being brought up as Protestants she has rich relations who will help her generously. But the mother loves the *souls* of her children, she values faith as a priceless treasure, and struggles on unaided, rather than accept comfort at such a price. In the midst of poverty she is calm and unmoved, because God upholds her.

"Be strengthened" is the final recommendation. How do we strengthen the body? By food and exercise. So the soul is strengthened by spiritual food and exercise. We must be faithful to our daily prayers, regular in receiving the Sacraments. There must be no caprice as regards our spiritual duties. The very act of striving to conquer self strengthens the soul just as wrestling strengthens the body. As violent winds cause a tree to extend its roots, and thus it is enabled to resist the storm, so the adverse winds of temptation, the daily trials of life, if bravely borne, make us vigorous Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ. In our Confirmation we received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and we have a title to these gifts as we need them. When the difficulties come, invoke the Holy Ghost that He may—

> With patience firm and virtue high
> The weakness of our flesh supply.

ON PRAYER

We are accustomed to the variations in the weather. No one is surprised to see the barometer rise and fall ; besides the daily variation we have the change of seasons with all the intervening stages. So it is in our spiritual life ; we do not, as a rule, remain long in the same state. Now it is summer in the soul, all is bright and joyous. Prayer is a pleasure ; we feel we could pray for hours and have an ardent desire for Holy Communion. Virtue is easy to practise and there are no great difficulties. All of a sudden this state changes, we feel dry, disinclined for prayer, devotional exercises bore us and we no longer have the same feelings of tenderness. Distractions overwhelm us, virtue is difficult to practise ; consequently we feel dismayed and sad. Violent storms of temptation overtake us and all seems so blank and dreary. This is the winter season of the soul ; it is necessary in order that a Christian may bring forth fruits of holiness. These two states are two extremes equally profitable to the soul. We must expect them and learn how to behave during each season.

Consolation is a gift of God, we cannot have it always. The young frequently receive this spiritual sweetness to help them in the struggle

against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to draw their hearts to God. Sometimes he bestows this gift on great sinners: they are touched by a sermon, drawn to pray fervently, and thus return to the path of virtue. Great saints receive spiritual joy and devotion as a reward of their patient and heroic struggles; but even souls advanced in holiness do not possess God's gifts of spiritual consolation at will, much less can the weak and imperfect aspire to have them always.

Why does God give these graces to the soul? To be a help, to cheer on the right road and strengthen the weak will. They are not given because we are saints, but to help us to become holy. If they hinder us on the road, if they make us proud, self-satisfied, or neglectful of duty, God will withdraw them. Spiritual consolation is a *means* of holiness, not the *end*. To profit fully by these favours we must be humble, and not think ourselves saints because we have good intentions or feelings of devotion. We must be unselfish, and leave our spiritual exercises when charity bids us help a neighbour. We must be detached from these favours; to long for them incessantly, to give all up when deprived of them, are forms of spiritual gluttony. You will say: "May I not wish for consolation since it helps me to do right?" Yes, you may desire and even pray for it, provided you are contented to suffer its absence patiently. There is one kind of consolation that is always in our power. Suppose we call it solid consolation. It consists in having an energetic will to do our duty and serve God, come what may, in an

earnest longing for holiness and increasing generosity in God's service. It also includes the resolution to serve God in prayer, no matter how He may try us by spiritual desolation.

What do we mean by spiritual desolation? It is a state of soul in which we suffer more or less. Our mind is full of distractions, we feel disinclined for prayer, cold or at least lukewarm, when we receive the Sacraments. There is a feeling of uneasiness, weariness, and dryness in the soul, everything in God's service seems difficult. Sadness overwhelms us, and, in addition, we are subjected to violent storms of temptation. Most Christians suffer desolation in some degree now and then, others have it habitually. Now it is a crushing burden, now it merely worries us.

Whence comes spiritual desolation? From *God*, the *devil*, and *ourselves*. These are the three sources, but we can profit by it whencesoever it comes, if we conduct ourselves aright. This cross is sent to those who are striving to serve God, in order to increase their virtue, and it is given to saints to augment their merit. St. Theresa sometimes found an hour of prayer so long that she used to shake her hour-glass to shorten the time. God sends desolation to try our faith; the devil sends it that he may turn us from the service of God. Lastly, we often bring desolation on ourselves by our unfaithfulness to grace and by our worldly lives.

In general, desolation is a means of expiating our past sins; of increasing our merit and of strengthening the soul. If, however, desolation is

to be profitable, we must use it well. Prayer must not be neglected because it is difficult; for we do not pray simply because it is a *pleasure*, but because it is a *duty*. So no matter how dry we feel, ordinary devotions should be performed. Our will must be firmly resolved to serve God for Himself, not for the consolations He gives. To do otherwise is to be a fair-weather Christian. A Child of Mary should never neglect the Sacraments simply because she feels cold and distracted. Many girls go to Mass with the intention of receiving Holy Communion; but when the time comes to go to the altar they remain in their places. "Why did you not go?" "Because I felt no devotion." That is no reason for disobeying your confessor. Do your best as regards preparation and go. Your Communion thus made may be far more beneficial than a Communion at which you have felt great spiritual sweetness. You go to the altar for strength, not for sweetness. Just as we have to force ourselves to eat when we have no appetite, so we must take our spiritual food in spite of our lack of spiritual hunger. You must never change your resolutions when in a state of desolation; wait till you are calm and go on, as well as you can, until then. You will object that you offend God in this state. Not necessarily; and if you do, the falls are atoned for, by the many acts of resistance you made before giving way. When we are travelling on a cold windy night it is difficult not to go a few steps out of our way, nor can we get on so fast as when all is calm. Yet to go a short distance we have

to put forth a great deal of energy ; with the same fatigue we could go much farther on a calm night. God counts our *efforts*, not the *results* ; therefore, in His sight, we are further ahead than if it had all been easy work.

These few thoughts on the different states of the soul naturally lead us to speak of prayer, which is the great means of salvation and one of the most powerful weapons against our besetting sin. We must pray daily. Prayer is the respiration of the soul ; the Christian cannot live without it. Morning and evening prayer is a duty for all, therefore a few rules on prayer may be useful to some Children of Mary who have not time to read long discourses on this subject.

1. Put *quality before quantity*. It is good to say certain prayers daily, but if time presses it is better to say fewer prayers well rather than hurry through all.

2. Pray in spite of distraction ; if possible turn your distraction into prayer. Thus you have been vexed by a friend and the angry feelings come surging up in your heart when you kneel to pray. Offer up a prayer for your friend and you will outwit the devil by an act of charity. Do not get angry with the distractions and take violent means to get rid of them, we do not shoot flies as a rule. Avoid retracing the train of thought which led you away from prayer. Simply get on to the right road, as soon as you perceive that your mind is wandering. Do not stop on the wrong path scolding or pitying yourself.

3. Go to your prayer as to an altar of sacrifice ;

that is, be prepared to suffer and wrestle with God, if necessary. Sometimes, when we are in physical pain, the only prayer possible is an act of submission to God's will, and a short ejaculation from time to time. If you have ever had a serious illness you know how difficult it is to pray then. In this case our pain speaks for us, and is a most efficacious prayer.

4. Do not lose confidence when God seems deaf to your prayer. When we pray we always obtain what we want, or *something better*; but no prayer is ever uttered in vain, for God cannot be unfaithful to His promises.

5. Take a respectful posture during prayer. We should kneel, if possible; but if fatigue distracts us, then we can sit, but not in a lounging attitude, for we are speaking to God.

6. Use the prayers of the Church, for they are sacramentals. How many Children of Mary have not a Missal, and do not even know how to use one. They content themselves with some little prayer-book, tastefully bound and printed in diamond type. They soon know these prayers by heart, and get tired of them, if they use their prayer-book and do not merely hold it. Yet the prayers of the Church offer such a rich source of beautiful thoughts and petitions if we would only use them.

7. Esteem the public prayers of the Church. Holy Mass ranks first, then comes Benediction and the various public devotions. These are far preferable to our own little private devotions, for they are inspired by the Holy Ghost.

8. Remember to thank and worship God. So many Christians imitate the nine lepers, they do not thank God, and fewer still think of the great duty of adoring Him. Their prayer is mostly in the form of petition. "Give me this grace," "Avert this danger from me." We must try to forget self in prayer and fulfil the noble duty of praising God.

9. Let the Rosary be your daily homage to Mary. If time presses say at least one decade, but do not let a day pass without honouring our immaculate Mother.

These simple rules, kept faithfully, will be a great help, for every Christian must pray. The first step in a downward career is the neglect of prayer. It is the thin end of the wedge and opens the door to so many evils. As long as we pray we are safe, our heads are above water; the moment we neglect prayer we begin to sink. If you have ever fallen away from God for a time, you know that you began by neglecting prayer. We are too weak to fight unaided, we need the "Everlasting Arms" to uphold us, and our only resource is to throw ourselves into them and rest assured that our Heavenly Father will sustain us in all our difficulties.

ON A RULE OF LIFE.

WHEN a traveller has to journey through a strange, wild country, infested with robbers, he takes the precaution to hire a trusty guide. He would not be mad enough to venture alone in the midst of so many perils. He does not know his way, nor can he even so much as recognise his foes, much less cope with them. We are on a lifelong journey from earth to Heaven; we can make it but once and our road is beset with robbers, the world, the flesh, and the devil, who would wrest Heaven from us. In this journey we need a guide, and we shall find one in a rule of life wisely framed.

Such a rule is *a guide* which points out the right road. Suppose we doubt how we should act in some particular case; thus, we should like to go to some entertainment, but are not quite sure if it would be right to do so. We look at our rule of life and find that we had laid down as a general principle that when two paths are thus before us, the safer is generally that which involves the most sacrifice. That settles the question, we will not go; our guide has pointed out the path. Another time our rule warns us of a danger. We make up our yearly accounts and find that the amount we decided to spend on dress has been considerably exceeded. What about vanity and extravagance,

two things which we had proposed to avoid? We must listen to the warning and economise. Now it stands in good stead as a *barrier* keeping us from evil or evil from us, just as a barrier may serve a double purpose. Look at that traveller crossing a deep precipice: the plank bridge is narrow, and the abyss below makes him feel giddy when he looks down; but fortunately there is a railing to the frail bridge, and the traveller can cross safely. He reaches the other side and pursues his journey. Now he passes a large enclosure. There is a dangerous animal inside. Look at that bull with blood-shot eyes, tearing up the ground with his horns; but a barrier stands between him and the traveller, and the latter can pass in safety. So in life, when we are tempted to plunge into the abyss of worldliness, or when the world would invade our soul, a rule of life *well kept* stands as a barrier. We may say with truth, "Keep thy rule and thy rule shall keep thee." Now it comes to us with a gentle reminder. We had resolved to go to bed at ten and not to continue our recreation one minute later; but we have such a nice book, we want to finish it. The clock strikes, and a small voice seems to whisper: "God must have His time, you have not yet made your spiritual reading." We listen and close our book; our rule has helped us to be firm.

What should be the subject matter of our rule of life? Evidently since all our obligations are summed up in the threefold duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, we must take these as the base. Let us consider our duty towards God.

It must hold the first place in our resolutions. God must have His worship night and morning. We should also find some time for a little spiritual reading, say seven minutes daily; and some definite hour must be named, for what can be done at any time is often never done. A rosary can be said on our way to and fro, as we go to business, if we have no other time. If charity obliges us to give up our devotions, this is not breaking our rule. Many people make a mistake, and cling to the letter of their rule rather than the spirit. We must not be so narrow minded. Suppose that *charity* requires you to stay and make the fourth for a game of cards, the others cannot play without you, stay by all means, even if you have to neglect or shorten a spiritual exercise, and you will not displease God; it may be even more meritorious to play at cards since it involves a sacrifice.

We must have some rule as regards the Sacraments. As Children of Mary the rule of the Sodality binds us to monthly Communions; but suppose you are living now where there is no congregation established. In that case, have one special Sunday, the first of each month, or else keep to the same day you had when you attended the meetings. The monthly retreat might be made on the Communion-day. Take a quiet hour before the Blessed Sacrament to examine how you have kept your rule of life, make a little meditation, and finish by the preparation for death. When it is possible a resolution to hear Mass daily is excellent; those who cannot do so much might at least go once or twice in the week.

Our neighbour forms the next object of our rule. Resolutions as regards work differ with our age and position in life. Take the case of a girl who lives with her parents and has wealth at her command. She is not allowed to pass the day in idleness any more than a poor person, but her work will be different; she will have visits to make and friends to receive. She will, if her mother be a sensible woman, be asked to help at home. Ornaments require dusting, flowers have to be arranged and so on. A rule of life must include all this under the head of work. For a Child of Mary who earns her living, work is clearly defined. It consists in going to business or in working at home. The rule of life will regulate the time where there is a choice, as in the case of a girl who takes in dressmaking. There must be a fixed time for beginning and a definite number of hours allotted. Then, as regards manner, Holy Scripture supplies that, "as to the Lord, not to men." We must "work while we work." This banishes bad habits of slovenliness and deceit which are practised by those who waste their employer's time in novel reading. How cowardly an action it is for a girl to have a book hidden, which she brings out to read the moment her employer is not looking. Surely this is not working "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." On the other hand, we must not work feverishly, hurrying on with our work merely to get it finished, and often doing it carelessly in consequence. If we work for God, as we propose to do, we should work steadily, calmly and thoroughly.

There is another kind of work that we should do —namely, acts of charity to benefit our neighbour. All can do something to help the poor ; the rich give their time and money, the poor their services, but none are dispensed from the law of charity. Now suppose a Child of Mary kept a little needlework in hand for the poor. Knitted stockings, boys' scarfs, underlinen are all articles, which girls ought to know how to make. If only one a month was finished, that would be twelve garments a year for Christ's poor ; and charity will never lose its reward. Charity for another might mean visiting the poor, devoting ourselves to some good work, and doing it constantly in spite of ingratitude and difficulties that may fall to our lot. Without going outside our own house there are so many acts of charity to be performed. There is, perhaps, an aged grandmother to whom we can read daily, or an invalid with whom we can converse. In the life of a saintly person it is related that she was ever seeking to render service to others, no matter how much it might cost ; an old servant expressed her mistress' line of conduct in these words : " She jumps at a sacrifice like a cat after a mouse." Of how many Christians could this be said ? Often it would be nearer the mark to say that they run away from sacrifices, as a mouse runs away from a cat. Yet if we realised what sacrifice is, for whom it is offered, and how much we ourselves benefit by it here and hereafter, we should not flee from it as we do. So leave a good margin for sacrifice in the rule of life, and give your neighbour his share of loving care.

What about our friends? We must have a very clear idea of what a friend should be, and resolve firmly never to choose for a friend any one whom we cannot respect; then we should further resolve not to let friendship interfere with duty; this one simple rule will guide us through many a labyrinth. It will regulate the time we pass with them, it will curtail frivolous conversations and banish human respect. In the chapter on the choice of a friend, you will find other duties specified on the subject.

Lastly, our rule must regulate our own private life, and there are many items which make it up. We must legislate for our sleep, recreations, expenditure, for the method of fighting our besetting sin. How much sleep should we allow ourselves? A great deal depends on our health, work and age. A delicate person requires more than a strong constitution, a brain-worker may need more than one who does manual labour. In general, for a Child of Mary in fairly good health, suppose we say eight hours. This is ample, and we may give something extra during the holidays, or after any exceptional fatigue. We can do with seven hours, but it is better to allow a margin and be faithful to our rule, than to decide on less and give more. Eight hours per day means one-third of your day, it represents ten days spent in sleep out of each month, and four months out of every year. Looking at it in this light, and considering how short life is, how can we wish to spend, as many do, ten and eleven hours daily in sleep? Notice that our rule should fix the number of hours; we cannot always settle the exact time of retiring to rest,

since duty or even pleasure may cause that to vary.

Recreation must be provided for, both as regards kind and quantity. For some, reading is their recreation, for others games, for others exercise, such as walks or cycling. Our recreation must be wholesome, appropriate to our station of life and within our means. It should not encroach on our time for work. Hours spent in reading sensational novels would be unwholesome recreation. For a servant to attend the art class is unbefitting her station. Let her rather go to the cookery or dressmaking classes; this will help her on in life. There is no harm in learning to dance, but if our parents need help it is surely wrong to spend money on dancing classes which should be spent on our home. Take, therefore, some definite resolution as regards the time aud kind of recreation you will allow yourself.

Another very important matter to consider is how we spend our money. For a girl living at home, who merely has pocket-money, and not too much of that even, this does not present much difficulty. She has a little resolution to make about giving God and her neighbour something so as not to spend *every penny on herself*. The case is more serious when a girl, who is her own mistress, has her income either inherited or earned yearly. Money is a talent we must use for God, so a fervent Child of Mary will decide how much she can afford to spend on food, dress, travelling expenses and pleasures. God should have His share, and the poor are not to be forgotten. If

possible, a girl must keep within rather than up to her income. This is true whether we take the case of a servant who has £12 or of a governess who is earning £60. Many people cannot tell you how their money goes, they keep no account. This is foolish, as it exposes them to incur debts; and when they have a home of their own it may be a very serious matter not to regulate their expenses. Get into the habit of keeping your accounts while you are young, and you will reap great benefit from it. A young lady who wasted the greater part of her money was cured of this bad habit by a wise friend, who simply asked her to keep a detailed account of every penny she spent. The girl promised to do so, and at the end of a month the numerous entries of chocolate creams, butter scotch, and pastry astonished her and made her feel still more ashamed. It is wonderful how much good we can do with limited means, when we are economical.

In conclusion, choose a watchword which will stir you up to action when temptation comes. Here are a few examples: "Duty before pleasure," "All for Jesus," "Courage! Heaven is worth striving for," "What will this profit me for eternity?" "A generous heart is stirred to action by a sacrifice," "Souls are won by sacrifice," "Love thy neighbour as thyself," "Judge not," "Blessed are the merciful." Then, as a codicil to your rule of life, add this resolution, "I will repair the breaches in my rule of life," for so often we take up a rule for a time, fail to keep our resolutions and then give up all. It is impossible that

we should not fail sometimes; but we must mend the breach at once, or the result may be fatal. The beautiful story of little Peter, who stopped the hole in the dyke with his arm and remained thus all night, teaches us a useful lesson. We must be generous and repair the breach, even at the cost of a sacrifice; for Heaven is promised to those who persevere to the end.

When thy days on earth are past,
Christ shall call thee home at last;
His redeeming love to praise,
Who hath strengthened all thy days.

A MOTHER'S PORTRAIT.

PART I.

HAVE you your mother's portrait? Yes, it is one of your dearest treasures, and if God has called her to Himself, you would not part with it for anything. The photo was taken years ago; it is now fading fast, but you keep it from the light, and, imperfect as it is, you value your mother's portrait. It may have an influence for good on your life.

A pious Child of Mary, when about eighteen years of age, lost her mother who had brought her up well, and taught her that true piety, which consists in fulfilling God's will, when it is pointed out by the voice of duty. Gertrude had a hard life in perspective, for her father had no religion, and, moreover, was a terrible drunkard. In his sober moments, which were few and far between he was a kind father, but in his drunken fits he was the terror of the home. Trouble had hurried his poor wife into the grave. Now Gertrude had to bear the brunt of his mad fury.

Months passed and the cross seemed beyond her strength. She became engaged secretly, and was urged by her lover to deliver herself from such a wretched existence by a runaway marriage. In a moment of weakness she consented, made her

preparations, and the day was fixed when Gertrude was to leave home and put an end to a life of misery. Conscience upbraided her, but she justified her conduct by repeating to herself that life was unbearable at home.

The day came when she was to take the final step. The marriage was to take place early; they were to leave for the Continent and thence write to the father. With trembling hands the girl packed her trunk and was ready to start, when, remembering she had some old letters and souvenirs in a drawer, she went to fetch them. On opening the drawer her eyes fell on her mother's portrait. It brought back to her the scene of her mother's death-bed. She seemed to hear again her mother's voice and the words uttered so slowly and painfully: "Gertrude, my child, never leave your poor father. Pray for him and for yourself; do your duty come what may. God will help and reward you." Gertrude paused and wept. For weeks, like all girls who walk on a wrong path, she had not prayed. Now she hesitates—why should she be condemned to a life of slavery? After a bitter struggle the thought, suggested by her mother's portrait, by the grace of God bore fruit. Gertrude knelt and prayed for strength to do her duty, and promised to give up her sinful project.

For months she fought her battle bravely, when one evening her father was brought home insensible. In a state of intoxication, he had met with a severe accident. Gertrude devoted herself to him; he was crippled for life, but it was the means of his salvation; he thought seriously, prayed for

the grace of Faith, and, won by his child's piety and filial affection, entered the Church. He lived for years after a fervent Catholic, and Gertrude never again had cause to complain of her home.

"Did she marry after all?" the reader asks. No, she devoted her life to her father and to helping in good works. Perhaps her disinclination for wedded life may have been caused by hearing that the man whom she was on the point of marrying was sentenced to penal servitude for forgery shortly after her father's accident.

Gertrude had her mother's portrait recopied, but never parted with the original, and on the back she wrote these words :—

> "Time has but half succeeded in his theft,
> Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left."

If the portrait of an earthly mother had such an influence over her child, how much more should the image of our heavenly Mother soothe and guide us? Life's pilgrimage is wearying, our enemies are numerous; perhaps some unpalatable "home truths" about ourselves have been revealed, temptations have attacked the weaker side of our character, and the future looks forbidding and gloomy. Few can look their faults in the face without being discouraged, so let us for a few moments contemplate something more consoling than self, something that will give us courage to be generous in God's service. How can we better accomplish this than by gazing at our Immaculate Mother's portrait? Imperfectly though her likeness may be sketched, yet some truth may go home

to the heart when the example comes from Mary our Mother and Model. All earthly portraits of our dear Lady can be but bare outlines, yet, since we know what they are meant to represent, faith and love will supply relief, form, and colour. Mary our Mother, Queen of Saints and Angels, is the model of all virtues, for she practised them with the utmost perfection. We will take a few of those virtues we need most and see how they are exemplified in Mary's life.

Purity is the first virtue that strikes us when we think of our Blessed Lady. Immaculate in her conception, she preserved untarnished the purity of her soul. Eve, too, was created immaculate, but she lost her inheritance and thus degraded her posterity. Mary kept that grace; she took the necessary precautions as though she were a sinful child of Adam; she watched over herself, and the bare thought of sin caused her unspeakable anguish What it must have cost her to live in a world of evil God only knows, for she realised so intensely the greatness of the insult sin offers to God. Mary's love of virginity led her to sacrifice even the hope of being the Mother of the Messiah. All for God, no earthly love was to come between her and the Creator.

We are Mary's children, and when we are tempted to soil our soul by sin, to stain the virginal purity that should characterize every child of Mary, let us look up and invoke the Virgin of Virgins, the Mother Undefiled, and she will come to the assistance of her tempted children and enable them to preserve unblemished the angelic virtue of chastity.

According to a tradition, Anne and Joachim conducted their child to the High Priest and consecrated her to God. Young as she was, pure as an angel, she fled from the world. All her joy was to work for God and to commune with Him. Whilst plying her needle actively, her thoughts were fixed on God. How the angels must have hovered over Mary ; of all those who had inhabited this world since the creation of Adam and Eve she alone was sinless, and this Child, the *one* on whom God could gaze with pleasure, lived in the courts of the Temple. She found her happiness in prayer, in work and in sacrificing the pleasure of living under the same roof as her parents. When in later life, Jesus leaves her for His Apostolic work, we find the same spirit of detachment, and after the Ascension of Jesus, the disciples clung to Mary and persevered with her in prayer. Work, self-sacrifice, and prayer are ever to be found in the life of Mary. They helped to constitute its beauty and her merit.

So must it be for us. When we are weary of labour, when we long for mere human affection, when we faint in prayer, we should look at our Mother's portrait and ask her to teach us how to pray, labour, and live for God alone. *Vas spirituale, Vas insigne devotionis, ora pro nobis!*

Zeal for God's Temple was another of Mary's virtues ; from childhood she lived within its precincts and when she grew up and left the Temple, her heart and thoughts were ever there. A tradition tells us how she loved to pray as near the Holy of Holies as possible. Her fingers were skilful in

embroidering vestments for the priests and rich hangings for the walls of God's House. Mary's children, in imitation of their Mother, should be zealous for the beauty of God's Sanctuary—the place where Jesus, veiling both His Divinity and His Sacred Humanity, dwells in the Tabernacle. Like Mary, her children can consecrate their time and talents to the service of the altar, by contributing to the Altar Societies, bringing flowers for Mary's Shrine, and helping to make or repair the altar linen and vestments. These are acts of religion, that virtue which ranks next to the Theological Virtues. To perform these acts often entails a sacrifice, and thus we exercise two virtues and acquire a double merit. Even the poor can give their mite. Here is an example :—

A Catholic who earned her living in a string factory was in the habit of taking a bunch of flowers to the church every Saturday for our Lady's altar ; week after week and year after year, she continued her little offering. How did she get the money? At the price of a sacrifice. She allowed herself fourpence a day for dinner, on Fridays she deprived herself of a hot meal, dined on a penny roll and gave the threepence to God. How precious these flowers must have been to Mary ; far more than the gifts of those who gave of their abundance. Such acts require a loving heart and a generous soul.

Let us pass over to the time when Mary was living at Nazareth under St. Joseph's care. Here, too, her life was divided between labour and prayer. She lived a hidden life utterly unconscious of self.

She knew not that the angels of God regarded her with admiration and amazement, that the Blessed Trinity looked down on her with joy; her one thought was God, for Him alone she lived. Then came the solemn moment when God sent her a heavenly messenger to tell her that she was destined to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Mary was saluted by the angelic ambassador as full of grace; "full"—therefore, she began where saints finish; they, after years of toil and pain are filled with grace. Mary was pure from the first moment of her existence; every action increased her merit and consequently her degree of grace. When Jesus became incarnate, who can imagine what torrents of grace inundated the soul of our Blessed Lady In silence and humility the great act of the Incarnation of the Word took place while Mary in her lowliness called herself the "handmaid of the Lord." —*Ecce ancilla Domini.*

To be detached from self is the secret of true humility. Vanity, susceptibility, and all the evil brood of pride come from the inordinate love of self. The Christian who can live *outside of self* is truly humble. Humility appears to be our Mother's special virtue. Just as God seems to love exercising His mercy in preference to His other attributes, so Mary seems to have made humility her favourite virtue. Is it ours? Where are we as regards humility? The answer is probably not very reassuring; still we must not be discouraged, for this is another offspring of pride. Let us look up to Mary and invoke her; Mother of God and Virgin Most Faithful. She will help her children to prac-

tise her cherished virtue. A prayer for humility must go straight to Mary's heart ; she cannot refuse to grant it, since our sanctification is the will of God and there is no holiness without humility.

We must pray for this virtue and, having prayed, await patiently and courageously the *occasion to practise it.* We shall often fall in the struggle to obtain it, but must persevere, remembering that even our falls can be utilised to help us on the road. We have so many reasons for being humble, which Mary had not. We were born in sin, our inclinations are prone to evil ; how many times in our life have we offended God wilfully, to say nothing of sins of frailty !

Here is matter for reflection, yet as we gaze on our Mother's portrait, if we feel ashamed of our paltry pride, if we are resolved to try bravely to conquer self, if we can look our pride in the face without being discouraged, resolved to fight it till our last breath, then Mary has already heard our prayer and given us the first fruits of this truly Christian virtue.

A MOTHER'S PORTRAIT.

PART II.

ONE more glance at our dear Mother's portrait, and the lessons it teaches must close this series of simple home-truths. We have looked at it under several aspects already, but so much remains to be seen. We will continue to gaze on the life of our Heavenly Mother and learn a few more lessons as we consider the chief events of her life.

"The Word was made Flesh." Jesus had visited Mary, and she was penetrated with His Divine Presence. How does Mary behave? She does not remain in an ecstacy of contemplation, forgetting that her fellow-creatures have a claim to her love and sympathy. She sets out, bearing Jesus within her, to visit and congratulate her cousin, St. Elizabeth. Notice the charity of Mary. The Mother of God does not wait for St. Elizabeth to visit her. True charity always takes the first step. Mary remained three months at Hebron. It was there she uttered her canticle of praise and humility, proclaiming that henceforth all generations should call her blessed. Through her, St. John the Baptist is sanctified in his mother's womb. Having consoled her cousin, Mary returns home, still occupied in spirit with her Child and

her God, discreetly keeping all these things in her heart. Scripture does not tell us that she told her cousin of the marvellous operations of God's power; these seem to have been revealed to St. Elizabeth by the Holy Ghost. Mary, though the Mother of God, was the first to render her neighbour service; can her unworthy children do less?

Mary practised discretion, knowing what should pass her lips and what should be kept back. Mary spoke when it was for God's glory, she kept silence about her own greatness and prerogatives. We cannot imagine our Heavenly Mother having an unkind thought, for we know that she never sinned, and unkind thoughts stain the soul of the thinker. When we are tempted to be uncharitable, to leave all the burden of toil to others, to express our opinion too freely, and to boast of our talents and position, let us look at the portrait of "Our Lady of Good Counsel," and we shall see how we ought to conduct ourselves and watch over our tongues.

Day by day, Mary grew in grace and union with her Divine Son: at last, the first Christmas Day drew near. Mary receives orders from God, not directly, but through a pagan Emperor, to go to Bethlehem.

What absolute want stared them in the face at Bethlehem! Not a roof to shelter them; their only refuge was a stable. Yet our Lady never murmured; she did not desire the wealth of earth, because God was her only treasure. Even when the Magi brought her rich gifts, a tradition tells us, she gave them to God and His poor. At her Purification she made the offering of the poor: she did not aspire

to a rank above her humble condition. How marvellously Mary rose above the things of earth, to which we cling so strongly. Where is real greatness of soul? Where is true nobility? Is it not in despising the riches that must take to themselves wings, sooner or later, for the treasures of holiness which shall last for eternity? This is one of the most beautiful of Mary's portraits—her absolute indifference to all the world esteems. Not only was she indifferent, but she loved and cherished poverty. She possessed Jesus, He was her treasure, nought could deprive her of Him, and having God, she was satisfied. Are you tempted to long for comforts, to indulge every sense, to desire wealth and luxuries? Do you find it difficult to make a voluntary act of mortification, to support poverty when God sends it? Look at Mary, gaze on your Mother's portrait; how can you be her child when you are so totally unlike her? If you have a pure conscience, if you possess Jesus in your heart, you are a *spiritual millionaire*. The rest is nothing, death deprives a man of all except the merits of his good works and the possession of God. How the artificial wants we create for ourselves enslave and rob us of our independence. We are God's children, we are too great for the things of this world. *Sursum Corda* should be our motto. Are we poor? Thank God: that makes it all the easier for us to save our souls. Are we rich? Then we must take great care not to attach ourselves to the comforts and luxuries of life, for they degrade and stain the soul that lives for them.

Jesus was on earth, He had been worshipped by

the shepherds and the Magi in the stable, now He visits the Temple. The Messiah was expected among the devout Jews. Holy Simeon had been told that he should not see death until the promised Saviour appeared in the world. Anna, the prophetess, and many devout souls were expecting Him. On the fortieth day after His birth, Jesus was carried to the Temple. There was no law binding Mary to present her first-born, He was no sinful child of Adam, yet she takes Him, offers the gift, and goes through the ceremony of the Purification herself. Why did Mary act thus? To teach us obedience.

Why does the very idea of obedience raise a spirit of rebellion in man? Is it not because *he fails to grasp the true principle of obedience?* A Christian obeys man for God's sake, because all authority emanates from God, whom the creature represents. A truly obedient soul *looks through the creature* who gives the command *and perceives God*, who wills or permits the order. St. Joseph tells Mary the angel has bidden them go into Egypt, and Mary obeys.

Years passed by, and day by day Mary was in the society of her Divine Son; hourly treasures of grace were bestowed on her. To what a degree of holiness must she have arrived, when in His thirtieth year, Jesus announced to her that His public life was about to begin. Mary accepted; she had been deprived of His presence for three days, when He was lost at the age of twelve, and had borne it bravely though "sorrowing." Now He was to leave her roof for ever, since the public life of Jesus

was but a prelude to the Crucifixion when the "sword of sorrow," prophesied years since by Simeon, was to pierce her heart. Henceforth, sacrifice was Mary's daily portion, as indeed it ever had been since Jesus came on earth. Mary consented and suffered willingly to be deprived of the presence of Him, whom she loved as her child and adored as her God. Unlike the Apostles, she never forgot the Divinity when contemplating her Son. St. Joseph was dead; Mary was now left alone. During the three years of Christ's public life she saw her Son from time to time. Holy women ministered to Him and accompanied Him sometimes, that they might serve Jesus and the Apostles, yet Mary was not often with them. We find her present at the Crucifixion when His Apostles forsook Him and fled. If she heard of the conquests of Jesus and of His triumphant receptions, she also heard how, on His very first visit to Nazareth during His public life, the Jews dragged Him out of the synagogue and sought to cast Him down from the hill on which their city was built. How her heart must have suffered at the outrage! Over and over again "the Jews sought to kill Him," and there would not be wanting those who could inform her of these things, even if God did not reveal them to her. Then came the week of the Passion, and no creature ever suffered as our Heavenly Mother did during those days. She stood by the cross, she did not shrink from the sight. Mary drank the cup of sorrow to the dregs, sustained by the grace of God and the example of Jesus. "Queen of Martyrs, pray for us!"

Can any of us complain when our Heavenly Father sends some pain or sorrow? After all, it is our due, for we have sinned. It is for our sanctification; how else should we reach Heaven? Does suffering make us turn away from God and seek the pleasures of the world? Does it embitter us against God? Let us look at our Mother's portrait and try to realize the meaning of those words which perhaps we have often sung:—

> "My love of God shall *deeper* grow
> When crosses fall on me."

Crosses must needs come; borne for the love of God, they lose half their weight. If we had to choose our cross, who would have the courage to make the choice, and when would it be made? Life would pass and no cross be chosen. So God helps our weakness, and throughout Eternity we shall praise Him for His mercy, in not sparing us here below.

As Mary stood by the Cross of Jesus and saw Him in His bitter Passion, how she must have realised something of His infinite love of souls. For them He had become incarnate, toiled and suffered. Like her Son, Mary was inflamed with love for souls. St. John, given her by Jesus as a son, represented the innumerable Christians who should honour Mary and call her Mother. Jesus was the first Child of Mary—St. John was the second; he received his title at the foot of the Cross. How many since then have gloried in the title!

Mary's joy on earth after the Ascension of her

Son was to bring souls to Him, to tend the Church in its infancy, and to assist the Apostles. How much we owe to her unselfishness! Who taught the sacred writers all the details recorded by St. Luke respecting our Lord's infancy? Who knew them so well as His Mother?

Mary's love of souls was only surpassed by her love of God. For souls she would have given her life, as Jesus gave His, had God willed or permitted it. If St. Paul's zeal led him to utter these sublime words: "For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren who are my kinsmen according to the flesh," how much more must Mary have experienced these sentiments? Are we zealous in trying to save others? Is it our joy to bring them into the Church? Do we seek by *prayer*, *words*, and *example* to convert others and do good to all, principally "to those of the household of faith?" Our Mother's picture will animate us to greater zeal and self-sacrifice.

These are a few of the leading traits of our Heavenly Mother's character, and running through every one of her actions like a golden thread is the virtue of Charity, that virtue which excels all others and crowns all, because it is immortal. It was Mary's love for God that enabled her to practise all these virtues; day by day her love grew, till at last it caused the separation of soul and body. Love of God does not consist in words or sentiments only, the latter are not under our control; but it consists in bravely fulfilling our daily duty, and as we fulfil it, we grow in charity. Do we love God? Many imagine that if their love of

God was sincere, they would feel inflamed with seraphic ardour. This is not necessary: *to do Jesus' will is the best proof of love.* This was what Mary did, and in this we can imitate her. "Mother of Divine Love, pray for us."

One portrait of Mary represents her carried up to Heaven by angels. As we gaze on it we think of our Lord's words: "He that persevereth to the end shall be saved." Mary's virtues were crowned by the gift of final perseverance—the grace of graces. Eve began life sinless like Mary, but this great gift was lacking. Mary continued faithful to the end. How many put their hand to the plough and look back? Perseverance is the one great grace. How often we ask it, for none can merit this gift. Daily we say our "Hail Mary," and do not the words "now and at the hour of our death" include a prayer for perseverance? Would you persevere? Contemplate frequently your Mother's portrait; serve God faithfully in little things, and God will crown all His other gifts by that of final perseverance. Some day we hope to gaze on the sacred features of our Immaculate Mother and to hear her gentle voice. Meanwhile let us press on, and when we fall, let us invoke her aid, for she never fails her children in their hour of need.

"Mother! Mother! I am coming
Home to Jesus and to thee,
But my country's hills are distant
And their light I cannot see.
Mother, hearken as I pray,
Meet me on my homeward way,
Meet me, Mother mine, to-day.

"Do not wait until to-morrow,
For I need thee here and now;
Wait not till I come to meet thee
Rather, Mother, meet me thou.
Oh! in all I do and say
Come and meet me on my way
Mother Mary, every day."

PRINTED BY THE GARDEN CITY PRESS LTD., LETCHWORTH, HERTS.

244.54
C342

46402

AUTHOR CECILIA, MADAME

TITLE Home Truths for Mary's Children.

Fifth Edition.

DATE DUE | BORROWER'S NAME

STORAGE - CBE

46402

ED IN U. S. A.